

THE COLONEL'S
STORY

MRS. ROGER A. FRYOR



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TORONTO

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MRS. ROGER A. PRYOR

AUTHOR OF "THE MOTHER OF WASHINGTON AND HER
TIMES," "REMINISCENCES OF PEACE AND WAR"

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To the Memory
OF
MY DEAR ADOPTIVE MOTHER
MARY BLAIR HARGRAVE
TO WHOM I OWE ALL THAT I AM
AND MAY HOPE TO BE



THE COLONEL'S STORY



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THE COLONEL'S STORY

CHAPTER I

As I write of the Colonel, he seems to stand before me : handsome, deferential, and with a certain repose of bearing, ever the hall-mark of a gentleman.

He was wont to say of himself, "I am like a weather-beaten old oak : of small use in the landscape, but with a sheltering arm still, and, please God, a sound heart."

I can hardly imagine any one who less resembled the king of the forest. If it be necessary to illustrate the Colonel by a tree of some kind, I might liken him, in his grey suit, to a silver birch ; tall and straight, and well lichened at the top with grey moss.

Little Dorothea Berkeley could remember no time when he was not an honoured guest of her house. Her sister Shirley recollected well when he first came. Shirley was ten years old ; but Dorothea's little spirit had just been given to their sweet young mother, and although she was

present at the time of his arrival, she was not in a condition to observe events.

He had been invited by Dr. Berkeley, along with other distant parishioners of the country church, to dine after service. An afternoon storm prevented the return home of the guests of that day. The next day Shirley overheard her mother say to her father : "I haven't the heart to let poor James go back to his desolate home. Let's ask him to spend the week with us."

"Desolate?" exclaimed her husband.

"Miss Nancy was a good woman, Charles! Just and upright in all her dealings."

"God forbid I should deny it," said the Doctor. "The actions of such are supposed to blossom in the dust. If they do, Jim will find under the willows a fine crop of a peculiarly thorny species of cactus."

"James is not looking well," rejoined his wife.

"Of course not," the Doctor said. "He misses his tonic — his daily stimulus. He is suffering from void and depression. Just wait until I find another spirited housekeeper for him and he'll be all right. I had hard work yesterday to bring him home with me. He resisted at first 'out of respect to poor Nancy's memory.'"

On the night of this visit of the Colonel's he

had slept, because of the overflowing house, in the "office," by which name the Virginia planter dignified a small building in a corner of his grounds provided to serve as the master's *cabinet d'affaires*, where he might, undisturbed, give audience to his servants, transact his business, and incidentally lodge the young men of his house-parties.

The Colonel never afterwards slept anywhere else. For a long time it was his custom on Mondays to express regret that he "must leave sometime during the day," and the Doctor as regularly invited him to stay another week. In telling Dorothea this, Shirley added: "He is just like Isaac Watts! Sir Thomas Abney invited Isaac Watts to spend a night at Stoke Newington and he staid forty years."

The first keen consciousness of every child is awakened by some unusual event in the routine of its life; and yet, having no past as a standard of the reasonable and natural, few things surprise children. Presently something happens so transcendently delicious that a new life dates from it, and it never ceases to be a vivid memory.

One event in little Dorothea's child life stood thus apart. She had run away from her nurse as she was conducted through the great hall,

and had followed the Colonel into the Holy of Holies, the parlour. He stood by the high mantel-shelf, looking at the articles thereon — some of which he had presented to Mrs. Berkeley on his return from his last visit abroad. Looking down, he espied the infant with upturned face, and instantly she found herself swept upward in his strong arms to a giddy seat on his shoulder, that he might introduce her, as he said, to the Arts and Sciences. There she was, face to face with objects she had worshipped from a distance — the stately figures of the philosophers in an engraving of the School of Athens, a little marble Venus, and a Wedgwood reproduction of the Barberini Vase. This last she might “kiss but not touch.” It had been broken and mended, foreshadowing the fate, some years later, of its famous prototype. The child gazed long and wonderingly at its mystical figures: the timid soul fearfully entering the land of shadows, the little Love looking back and lighting the way with his torch. In her ecstasy she threw the fetter of a baby arm around the Colonel's neck, and then and there made him her thrall forever.

A joyous child life had followed that day, enriched at every step by the Colonel's kindness. Shirley and Dorothea had the freedom of his

two-roomed apartment in the yard — the Doctor having discreetly retired. He allowed them to roast apples on his hearth, where the juices could run without let or hindrance. They even coaxed an occasional partridge or sora from Hannah the cook, and roasted it to perfection, suspended by a string from his mantel to revolve slowly before the glowing coals. They took the Colonel with them chestnutting and chinquapinning, making him open prematurely the prickly burrs. Moreover he was retained as counsel when Dorothea was arraigned for breaking the laws of the land. And an able advocate he was! He never lost a cause. Only after flagrant acts of *lèse majesté* was counsel indispensable — such, for instance, as putting a night-cap on the sacred bust of Patrick Henry! Knowledge of the child's lesser crimes rarely reached the foot of the throne. The self-constituted Prosecuting Attorney, Hannah, — so quick to threaten, so eager to indemnify by a tart or cooky, — was quite capable of corruption through a bribe and of consequent malfeasance in office. Everybody caressed the baby of the house, whose enterprise expanded with her years and opportunities. An active, inquisitive child, running freely among the busy workers of an industrious Virginia household, might easily develop

— like de Quincey's brother — “a capacity for mischief amounting to inspiration.”

After a while the Colonel forgot the usual Monday courtesies, and nothing more was said of the possibility of his leaving Berkeley Castle. His own inherited plantation, with a comfortable house and old-fashioned garden, was five or six miles away, and thither he went occasionally to consult the old family servant who was his overseer. He was quite alone in the world. He had no family ties or obligations; had lost his parents while he was a student at Annapolis and been taken under the wing of his uncle, Admiral Ap Catesby Jones, then commander of the Pacific squadron. He was with the Admiral on the memorable occasion when a false rumour of our conquest of Mexico reached him, and caused him to plant the United States flag prematurely on the walls of Monterey. Our Colonel had wearied of the sea, resigned from the navy, travelled abroad, returned and studied law, pursuing the practice, as he said, until it fled from him. Restless and lonely, he occupied himself — sometimes in politics, sometimes in fitful experiments in farming. He had entertained various schemes and abandoned them, had invented a labour-saving machine of some sort, which was not

patented in time to prevent the use of a similar invention by somebody else. In this last experiment he was fully aware that his ideas had been seized and utilized by another; but he was content that it should be so. He had enjoyed his own part of it, and his competitor was quite welcome to the material profit. Any other result would have been an innovation in the history of his race. Like Renan's ancestors "they possessed at least one proof of their nobility — that whenever they attempted to engage in any commercial business, they were sure to be defrauded." They were too fastidious, sensitive, proud, or what not, to press forward and help themselves first. "When it came to taking the best piece out of a dish which was handed round, their natural politeness stood in the way." It is curious to find a brilliant Frenchman of that day expressing just the sentiments which controlled the old Virginian and for which he is so often ridiculed; — that "the pursuit of wealth is not the pursuit of a gentleman, and that it is a more respectable and honourable position, indicative of a higher breeding and a finer taste, to be decently poor than to be even decently affluent."

Having enough land to keep himself, his labourers, and cattle in comfort, help the poor and

the church, it never occurred to the Colonel that any obligation rested upon him to increase his fortune. He was a dreamer, and he was rich enough at least to indulge in dreaming. According to the ancient poet, dreams reach mortals through two gates. One, the gate of horn, admits prophetic fancies; the other, the white and shining gate of ivory, through which pass alluring, illusory dreams. Our Colonel's dreams all passed through the gate of ivory! Withal he was delightfully gentle and amiable, a man of refined tastes, and the soul of honour and chivalry of the highest type. He had always known Dr. Berkeley and his lovely wife, and with them he unconsciously cast his lot, happier in their home than he had ever been in all his life of thirty-five years, — years which had prematurely whitened his hair, so that he seemed older.

One morning in the early spring the Colonel appeared with the most charming little country wagon, to which was hitched his spirited "Conqueror." "You will ruin his gait," said the Doctor, "if he dawdles along country lanes, stopping every five minutes for the children to dig ferns! It's a shame, James, to degrade your racer in this way."

“Oh, I have given him up,” laughed the Colonel. “I’ve rechristened him ‘Primrose’ and consigned him to tread hereafter the paths of dalliance.” Many and happy were the afternoons spent in hunting for arbutus, or butterfly orchids, or the curling fronds of the early ferns.

But the happiest of all afternoons — of all the afternoons in all the world — were spent by the little party in a charming fairy glen in the woods. Shirley, who had been sent to school in New York, was home for the Easter holidays, and the Colonel had cleared this spot of all *débris*, — sticks, leaves, and undergrowth, — smoothed the grass to velvety softness, and there under the trees the sixteen-year-old beauty held court. No wheel-tracks nor hoof-prints led to this glen. Dorothea planted a great ring of grass in the moss, that the fairies, dancing by moonlight, might find at hand stems on which to hang their cups. By day they were all gone to fairy-land, and she installed her flower-maidens, the blossoms of wild azalea and yellow jessamine, capped them with the little yellow lady-slippers, and set their tables with dainty cups-and-saucers of white narcissus.

Thoroughly delightful was the talk inspired by the delicious little flowers. The Colonel could tell wonderful floral legends, many of which he

probably invented, and which cannot, therefore, be given to the truthful pages of this story. But one, the loveliest of all, was how the lily-of-the-valley came to be. "Fairies, you must know," said the Colonel, "are under strict government. They need it. They are volatile, giddy little creatures, and would dance themselves to death if allowed to follow their own sweet will. They must always dance within a charmed ring to keep the brownies away, — for fairies belong to the aristocracy and cannot keep low company. Moreover they are never permitted to be surprised by the dawn — or by anything else! They must be up and away before the moon goes down.

"Once they had a particularly good time. They hung on the grass the little cups in which they were to gather the morning dew, and were so happy at their ball that the rising sun surprised them. Running for their cups to collect the Queen's breakfast draught, each one was found to be fastened tight to the slender stem on which it hung. The little fairies wept so piteously that broad green leaves were mercifully permitted to grow around the cups, completely hiding the evidences of disobedience. One must look under these leaves for lilies-of-the-valley."

Primrose was always tethered at a safe dis-

tance, where his hoofs and nibbling could not injure the treasures of the glen, — treasures of moss, violets, harebells, lady-slippers, cardinal-flowers, — which fringed the brook and leaned over to drink at the little stream running away down the centre of the glen. Great willows arched above the small Paradise, allowing just enough sunshine to gem the brook with diamonds. There Dorothea scooped out tiny grottos, paving them with pebbles, and reared fairy castles carpeted with moss; while the Colonel, having piled the wagon-cushions for a seat for Shirley, would draw from his pocket a small volume, Shelley or Keats, and read aloud delicious selections describing just such fairy glens as this.

Shirley had grown to be tall and straight as a young cedar, and beautiful exceedingly. She would clasp her long arms about her knees with a far-away look in her eyes, and far away from Shelley or Keats or the good Colonel, — there is every reason to believe, — were all her thoughts.

A wonderful, long-stemmed flower bloomed in this glen, not a pansy, but a deep velvet violet, never seen elsewhere. "They are like Shirley," said the Colonel; "born in the purple, very reserved and stately, and yet stretching slender necks for a peep at the world."

The Colonel was attended in these expeditions by a little negro boy — of a blackness exceeding the traditional ace of spades, and wonderfully shrewd and observant. His arrival on the plantation had been coincident with a visit of the Colonel's a few years before Dorothea was born. A message from Hannah the cook had come early one morning, that "Marse Jeems would please find a notable name for a mighty fine boy."

The Colonel had gravely considered the matter and had, as a committee of one upon name and title, reported "Pizarro" as altogether suitable.

In the first place the boy, like the illustrious Spaniard, "was of obscure lineage, not likely to receive countenance or support from his father." Secondly, he had at an early age evinced ability as a conqueror and destroyer. Had he not held captive the great Purveyor of the realm, thereby subjecting the inhabitants thereof to comparative subjection?

Hannah appreciated the distinction conferred upon her offspring. Among her acquaintances were Washingtons, Jeffersons, Randolphs, — even a Rochambeau, unhappily corrupted into "Rushingbow," — but she was Queen Mother of the one

and only Pizarro. The boy was early promoted to the service of his sponsor. When it chanced that a visitor observed the droll little fellow and inquired his name, he would gravely answer, "Body servant to the Cunnel, sah."

CHAPTER II

THE Colonel would sometimes, on the way home from the glen, take the reins in his own hands, and bidding Pizarro run before to let down the bars in fences that crossed the road, he would turn Primrose's head down a grassy lane leading out from the woods, that he might "speak to Mrs. Bangs," *i.e.* convey to her a well-stocked basket from Berkeley Castle.

He would dismount at a well with a "sweep," — the stout trunk of a young tree, weighted with stones at one end and holding a bucket at the other, — and, unhooking Primrose's check-rein, would direct Pizarro to draw a pail of water for his refreshment, while he went forward to find Mrs. Bangs. She usually came out to her boundary fence and leaned upon it as she talked. A troop of carrot-headed children gathered around her, — she, her children, her house, and all belonging to it, an unbroken consonance of thriftless poverty. Even the geranium in a box on an old stump had early given up the ghost, utterly re-

fusing to make an effort towards leaf or blossom. The earth all around her dwelling was trodden bare and brown, and bare and brown were the feet of the trampers. Mrs. Bangs — tall, gaunt, depressed — had an inimitable way of picking up and even anticipating the Colonel's questions and weaving answers into a subtle expression of her troubles and needs.

“Won't Miss Shirley an' Dolly 'light? Wall—I can't blame 'em. Oh, no, sir, the pea-fowl won't skeer yo' horse. He ain't wild. He jus' feel sorter 'shamed an' naked-like 'cause I pulled out his tail feathers yistiddy. That's why he's runnin'. No, sir, I ain't sellin' 'em this spring. It's little I've got to set off my front room, let alone sellin' my pea-fowl feathers. Run in, sister, an' tell Ma'y Jane to sen' out them las' feathers to show little Dolly. Thank ye, Cunnel! — the meal lasted toler'ble well an' the bacon, too. They jus' about giv'n out now. I wouldn't mine havin' a quarter o' lamb an' a few pounds o' flour; — 'twould be a sort o' change. Mr. Bates? No, sir, — I ain't see Mr. Bates for a mont' or mo'. You needn' sen' word to him to come aroun'. We can git along. 'Tain't no use for Mr. Bates to come here, settin' an' *theein'* an' *thouin'* me 'bout bringin' up the chillern indust-

trus. I want to know what he knows 'bout chillern! He ain' nuver been down with nine, an' up ergin to do fur 'em; — let alone mumps an' chicken-pox, an' hoopin' cough an' measles! Hit's mighty easy talkin'. I hear folks say them Quakers nuver speaks onless the sperrit moves 'em. The sperrit cert'nly is spry roun' Mr. Bates when he comes here. Hit nuver moves him to give us nothin'! He ain't give us a cent, nor a peck o' meal; jus' sets 'roun' an' talks religion. Maybe he thinks he can convert me an' Ma'y Jane to be Quakers; but Ma'y Jane can't no ways abide them Quaker bunnets. She kin make her own bunnets, an' they are right tasty — but Ma'y Jane say she never could make them box-pleat Quaker crowns — she never could get 'em to set. No, sir, I ain't hear a word from Mr. Bangs. Thar's them as says we fout 'fore he lef' me. Mr. Bangs never strucken me a lick sence I was the mother of six — an' I 'low 'twas my fault then: answerin' of him back when he was wo' out with the chillern. 'Tain't likely he'd wait twel I was the mother o' nine ef he was layin' out for to leave me. No, sir, — we didn't have no words mo'n common. I never did hold with lettin' no man call me ha'sh names 'thouten me sayin' the same words back at 'im. Ther wornt no

onfrennliness — jes' to let 'im see how them words soun's. He jus' up an' tole me he was goin' for a walk, two mont's ago come nex' Sunday, an' he took an' slip out the back do' an' I ain't see him sence. He'll come back befo' frost, I reckon. He nuver done no work no how in summer-time, 'cept'n huntin' the weasel when he come terrefyin' the chickens. Sence he went away I los' fo' of my forwardes' pullets. I cert'nly was sorry he carried his gun with 'im. The hawks pester me turrible with my young chickens; an' Tom he kin shoot jus' as well as his Pa. Oh, thank ye, Cunnel! *Thank ye!* 'Tom'll cert'nly be proud to have a gun! His Pa needn' hurry home now. Well, you goin'? I cert'nly am obleeged to you for callin' by. Good-bye, Miss Shirley! Ask yo' Pa please to drop by an' see Ma'y Jane. Ask him to bring her a race or two o' ginger. She 'pears right down poly an' peaked this spring — don't do nothin' but jus' set an' set; an', oh, Miss Shirley! 'Fo' you git out o' hearin' — ask Miss Prissy to len' me the loan of her sleeve pattern. Ma'y Jane can't get her cornsent to go to meetin' in them skimpy sleeves o' hern an' thar's goin' to be a baptizin' a mont' from nex' Sunday. An', oh, Cunnel!" But Primrose had quickened his pace and shaken the Bangs dust

from his flying feet. They were too far on their way homeward to hear more.

"I never intend," said the Doctor, one day, "that any family living on my land shall go to the poorhouse. That fellow Bangs has been seen on his way to the West. He will never return. He will be small loss, — but those nine children of his! They must not suffer next winter."

"I have been thinking it over for some time," said the Colonel, "and I have a plan. You know Stevens, my overseer on the upper plantation? He is a steady-going, middle-aged fellow. There is an excellent house near the mill. Why not send Mrs. Bangs to keep house for the overseer? Her boys could find work at the mill. Who knows? Mary Jane might capture Stevens."

"Now just there you may pause," said Mrs. Berkeley. "Mary Jane is 'keeping company' with Dick Evans. Mary Jane stands before the counter at the country store and looks over the calicoes; Dick stands behind the counter and looks at Mary Jane."

"Take care!" said the Doctor. "Dick is no good, I'm afraid."

A few weeks later Mrs. Berkeley triumphantly announced: "It is all settled! I have given Mary Jane Bangs a wedding-dress, — blue merino,

— and Aunt Prissy has sent pins and needles and stockings and things. There are two good rooms over the store, and Mr. Perkins will rent them cheaply. I was about to ask you, Charles, to lend them the light wagon some day next week to take the party to the Rectory.”

“Why didn't you tell us?” everybody exclaimed at once.

“Because you would have meddled and broken it off,” laughed Mrs. Berkeley. “I could take no risks. Away from her mother I hope to do something with Mary Jane. She is a good girl, and, really, not ill-looking. Mrs. Bangs tells me Dick is very much in love. All looks promising for the young couple.”

On the day before the expected wedding, Mrs. Bangs presented herself in her limp sunbonnet and her usual dejected manner.

“Is anybody sick?” asked Mrs. Berkeley, kindly.

“No'm — the chillern are toler'ble peart, thank Gawd! Ma'y Jane ain't, so to speak, reconciled to stayin' home. Yes'm — he's lef' her! Writ a letter tellin' her 'twon't be wuth while to look fer him. Things cert'nly does run in families! What's bred in the bone is boun' to come out in the flesh.”

"Nonsense," said Miss Prissy, impatiently. "That doesn't apply at all. What has Mary done? Why should he leave her?"

"He jus' natcherlly took after her Pa—jus' walked out o' the back do', 'thout sayin' nuthin' to nobody."

"But Mr. Perkins? Mr. Perkins had advanced a month's salary."

"I jus' come from thar," said Mrs. Bangs. "Mr. Perkins ain't no ways consarned. He jus' said 'twan't none o' his business."

"He is in with him!" said Miss Prissy, indignantly. "It shouldn't be allowed. Dick Evans must be found and made to behave."

"I don't know as I keers to ketch 'im," sighed the poor woman. "When you capter them men erginst ther will, 'thout you got time to watch 'em mighty close, they gits away ergin. Ma'y Jane is turrible cut up an' hurted in her feelin's."

The Colonel's plan was presented and found immediate favour. The mill sounded most attractive. Then, too, the railroad had just passed through the country. "Could they ride on the cars?" The Colonel promised to give them this pleasure. Their humble home was five miles from the depot and their destination ten miles farther, near the railroad and in another parish.

He busied himself, helping the forlorn family. The cars passed very early in the morning; that was unfortunate, but the Doctor sent them with his trusty coachman in a comfortable conveyance with instructions to see them on their train. Their household goods preceded them in a farm wagon.

The Colonel hoped much from the move, and was very happy over the poor woman's prospects. She was not to be limited in pigs and poultry. She was to have a cow and garden space.

When the family assembled on the veranda next morning, the venerable coachman, Uncle Peter, approached, and baring his grey head proceeded to make his report. All had gone well. He had gotten them in time to the depot, but was obliged to consign them to the care of Mr. Bates, whom he found arriving, and wait with his horses a little way off, for the mare was "skittish." He had not turned homeward, however, until the whistle announced that they were fairly off.

"That's well over," said the Doctor, "and I am heartily glad of it. Now if we can solve all our 'poor white' problems as happily, we shall do well."

"I am sure Dick will return," said his wife.

“Mary Jane in a vine-clad cottage overflowing with corn-pone and fried chicken will be a very different girl from Mary Jane in a hovel.”

“Good Gawd !” exclaimed Milly, from an upper window, “what’s this a’ comin’ ?”

Mrs. Bangs and her nine children were emerging from the avenue of poplars and walking around on the gravelled path. “Well, here I be !” she said cheerfully as she sank upon the doorstep, — the nine children dropping down around her ; “I hope I ain’t wo’ out my welcome !”

“How in the world did you get left ?” exclaimed everybody at once.

“Well—it was jus’ this-er-way,” said the poor woman, fanning herself with her “slat” bonnet. “Some of the neighbours was gittin’ off the cyars, comin’ home, an’ I had to shake han’s an’ tell ’em all how d’ye and then good-bye. Course I had to run across an’ tell Miss Betty Oliver good-bye, an’ after all she was asleep. Them steam injines is cert’nly onpatient. Fus’ thing I know, they was movin’ off. I started to jump on, but Mr. Bates hilt on to me an’ Ma’y Jane an’ said, did we want to be kilt ? ‘Thee never did have any sense ;’ — that’s what Mr. Bates say to me ! Tom, he run after the cyars a good bit, hollerin’ to ’em to stop. They wornt noways particular

'bout manners. I never see sich! Jus' went on tootin' like everybody was on bode. I reckon the Doctor will let us stay here to-day, an' we can try ergin to-morrow mornin'. I can card an' spin a 'couple o' broaches, an' the chillern can pick up chips for Hannah. I reckon they'll mostly sleep all day, bein' they was restless all night fo' we started."

"Oh, that's all right, Mrs. Bangs!" said the Colonel, kindly, "bring your children to the office. You shall all have a pleasant day, have a good rest, and get off at daybreak to-morrow."

"Maybe you mout come with us, Cunnel," said the poor woman. "Them steam injines cert'nly does confuse my haid."

And so he did! He not only treated them with courtesy and kindness all day as his guests, — wincing only when they amiably used his brushes, — but he went with them all the way to their new home, and never left them until they were unpacked, the kitchen fire kindled, and groceries brought from the neighbouring country store.

"Mrs. Bangs cooked us a capital dinner," he reported the next afternoon. "Stevens was impressed. When I left, Mary Jane was sitting on the little porch, in a blue merino, with a ribbon in

her hair. She had made a wonderful silver fringe with Miss Prissy's pins stuck in the edges of her ribbons. Stevens evidently admired her. I think Dick will get the cold shoulder if he ever turns up at the mill."

"Which he never will!" said the Doctor. "Dick confided to Perkins that he was lost! There was nothing left for him to do but 'cut and run.' It seems he had never really meant it — never even thought of Mary Jane! It appears Mrs. Bangs is imaginative. We must be kind to poor Mary. She has her limitations. She is not a success as a match-maker. However, she can try again. Stevens will be better material."

CHAPTER III

BERKELEY CASTLE, now the residence of Dr. Charles Berkeley, had been built by an immigrant from the English family of Berkeley, who gave his Western home the name of the famous old Norman fortress and baronial hall on the banks of the Severn, known to be haunted by the ghost of a murdered king. "Castle" was not considered an eccentric or over ambitious name for the home of a Virginia planter — was not "every man's house his castle?" — nor must the house thus honoured be of necessity a pretentious one. A plain one-and-a-half-story, dormer-windowed, frame dwelling in a neighbouring county was known as "The Castle." Then there was "Bacon's Castle," and "Castle Hill" — neither conspicuous for architectural claims to distinction. Dr. Berkeley's home was a large substantial building of brick, with a pillared portico, to which, on either side, rooms had been added as the Berkeleys had needed additional lodging for friends and relatives.

A fine avenue of poplars led from the main

road to Berkeley Castle; — Lombardy poplars, — “the tree, let them say what they will, most fitting to surround a gentleman’s mansion.” Chiselled on the gate-post at the entrance to the grounds were the arms of the good Lord Thomas Berkeley, who is “commended in our histories for his civil usage of King Edward the Second when prisoner in Berkeley Castle.” Time had not yet obliterated the pious motto, “Dieu avec nous,” nor the “ten crosses pattée” commemorative of the services of the family in the Holy War. Ten times had the Knights of Berkeley, with that motto on their lips as their battle-cry, quitted themselves like men in deadly conflict under the banner of the Cross, — ten times had their king rewarded them by granting the Holy Emblem upon their own shield. The story was told to the generations as they came and passed. Shirley had learned it from her father, and little Dorothea had early insisted to be lifted to her throne on the Colonel’s shoulder that she might trace with her chubby forefinger each one of the crosses, repeating the formula “*Mine, mine, mine,*” with which children establish a claim to coveted objects. The negroes on the plantation regarded the sacred shield as a charm against evil. The devil, they knew, went about like a roaring lion,

seeking whom he might devour, — his hoof-beats had been heard in the main road on dark nights, — but no one, not even Uncle Pompey, who was more than a hundred years old, and who was known to be subject to “trances,” had ever seen him. The country people no longer noticed the suggestive carvings. Once a stone-mason had paused to observe the proportions of the gate-posts and incidentally the chiselling, and had remarked that “any fellow who could do as pretty a piece of work as that would want to leave his mark upon it.”

One morning in June Dr. Berkeley entered the veranda in front of his house and began to pace impatiently back and forth. His saddled horse was awaiting him at the front gate beyond the wide gravelled path which encircled a grass plot bordered with flowers.

“You’ll have to discipline that boy of yours, James,” he called to the Colonel, who was walking slowly among the flowers which bordered the gravelled circle. “He gets later every day. It has been fully two hours since the cars passed. He can walk it in thirty minutes.”

“He’s probably playing marbles with the boys at the depot,” said Miss Prissy, an alert old lady, at the door. “As James has taught him to read,

he may be under the trees reading the Richmond Whig."

"Very likely, Aunt Prissy! — as far as the marbles are concerned, but I doubt whether Pizarro cares for our squabbles over the Wilmot proviso, or for the Mexican War, or the gold-fever. Bring out the spy-glass, Shirley!"

"Nowhere in sight!" the Doctor announced after sweeping the road in the distance.

"Why, here he comes at the back way!" exclaimed Miss Prissy. "Will you look at that boy? He's got Flora with him! They've been running after hares, I'll be bound."

"They missed the hare!" said the Doctor. "Look at Flora! Defeat written all over her, from the tip of her tongue to her tail! Come here, you rascal! What do you mean by this behaviour, — hunting hares instead of coming straight home with the mail?"

"I never hunt no ole hyar," said the panting little black boy, indignantly.

"Come, come, Pizarro," the Colonel warned sternly, "no lies, my lad, no lies."

"I ain' tellin' no lie; Gawd know I ain' see no ole hyar dis day."

"Where have you been, then?"

"Don't question him, Charles! Don't tempt

him," said the Doctor's gentle wife, who with Dorothea now appeared on the scene.

The child threw herself on the floor beside the panting dog and put her arms around his neck. "Poor Flora!" she said caressingly, "*you* don't tell lies! *You* couldn't do wrong 'less Pizarro made you," and she rolled her eyes disdainfully at the little black.

This was too much for the culprit. He blubbered out, "I done tole the truth! Gawd A'mighty" —

"*Stop, Pizarro,*" his mistress commanded. "Go to the kitchen and tell Hannah to send breakfast in right away. Wash your hands, Dorothea. Look at your clean frock! All stained."

The boy drew his knuckles across his eyes, and as he departed, looked back reproachfully at the party, and finished his sentence: "Gawd A'mighty know, I ain' see no ole hyar to-day. *'Twarn't nuthin' but a little squir'l.*"

But everybody was now gathered around the table upon which the Doctor poured the contents of the mail-bag. "Letters for you, James — some for me — one for Dorothea — some for Shirley — Where are you, Dolly? Well, Mary, you must take her letter."

"Hawkins usually puts in a note for me,"

added the Doctor, as he turned the bag inside out. "Ah! here it is! What a fist the fellow has! — 'Passengers report crops suffering for want of rain all along the road. Large crowd going North. Miss Patty Benson boarded the cars with Jerry Wilson. — None of her family with her. Looks like a runaway match. No other news.'"

"Hawkins is always liberal with his opinions," said the Colonel; but just then Pizarro appeared, endowed with a snowy apron, and gravely announced, "Brekfus raidy," returning immediately to his post in the dining-room behind his mistress's chair, where he stood like a Nubian figure at an Egyptian banquet, waving a plume of peacock's feathers to drive away the flies.

The Doctor asked a blessing, and the company was about to be seated when a subdued scuffle was heard at the door, and little Dorothea's pleading voice: "*Let me, Uncle Isham, oh, let me.*"

"You leetle more'n to drap it last time," the grey-haired butler remonstrated; but the child persisted. The Colonel steadied with his arm the vacant chair beside him, and helped her as she climbed up, and stretching her slight little body half across the table, carefully placed in the centre of it a print of butter crowned with a cream-white rose.

"Ah! this is what we were waiting for," exclaimed the Doctor, "and worth it, too."

"I churned it," Dorothea gravely announced, as she sank contentedly in her chair, and pushed the hair from her eyes.

"Humph" muttered the old serving-man. "You put yo' han's on the dasher jus' one minit'! Sis Mandy holler to me to make you come in the house. You sholy did pleg her!"

"Never mind, Dolly dear," said the Colonel. "We believe you, and so does Uncle Isham. The butter is fine, and the rose is lovely, — and you are the sweetest little housekeeper in Virginia."

Just here Pizarro, from his vantage-ground, announced that a gentleman was coming in. Everybody rose to welcome Mr. Winn, the Presbyterian minister, and make a place for him at the table.

"I rode over from Mr. Benson's," he explained. "We had a sunrise wedding there this morning, and I took the liberty —"

"Ah!" interrupted the host, "I am glad to see you. The depot agent just volunteered the suggestion that it was an elopement."

"Not a bit of it! I went with young Wilson to get his license, and all requirements of Church and State are observed and satisfied. Mr. Ben-

son is not one of my parishioners, but I had met Wilson."

"Well, we've lost our pretty girl," said the Doctor, as he uncovered the Sheffield dish and dispensed the broiled chickens. "I shall miss her! I met her late yesterday afternoon near Miss Betty Oliver's. A very fine figure on horseback."

"I don't think I've seen her a dozen times in as many years," said Miss Prissy.

"I never felt that I knew Benson although he has been my neighbour many years," said the Doctor. "Whenever I have seen him at the post-office or court-house, I have tried to be friendly with him, but meeting no response, repulse rather, I finally let him alone. I fear he is very poor. One could hardly scratch much of a living out of that worn-out piece of land he moved on twenty years ago."

"I never saw a more unapproachable man," said Mr. Winn. "As I am here only two Sabbaths in the month, I know very little about any one outside my own small flock, of whom, by the bye, your Scotch gardener is one."

"Well, then," said Mrs. Berkeley, "it appears we have lost an opportunity. A lovely girl has grown up and left us and we have

done nothing for her happiness. I am sorry. I called again and again, but my visits were not returned."

"I'm sure," said Aunt Prissy, "I did my best. I rode over when Patty was about ten years old — and begged her to come to my Sunday school class. She came only once. The little girls were to commit a verse of one of the epistles for the lesson that day, and she recited hers this way: 'Let your adorning be plaiting the hair, and wearing gold and putting on apparel.' Of course the children laughed — and when I told her the true words of the apostle and asked why she had omitted the 'not,' she said she thought it must be a mistake — that Saint Peter would have more sense! This made matters worse, — she left and never returned."

The Doctor looked distressed. "This miserable reserve and pride of men who are less fortunate than their neighbours is to blame for so much," he said. "I often wonder what we can do about it. There seems to be great injustice in it — especially in this case. Mr. Benson belongs to a good family. Peculiar circumstances placed him where he is. The girl lost an opportunity for instruction and companionship because she felt herself out of her element, simply because her

father was poor;— as if riches made one man differ from another.”

“Now, Charles,” his aunt said impatiently, “for gracious sake, let all that alone! It’s the same all over the world. You can no more do anything to change it than you can cure old Mrs. Ponsonby’s gout. It belongs to her class. It is very inconvenient, but there’s no help for it, and that is all there is about it.”

“Well, I can at least try, Aunt Prissy.” The Doctor sighed as he rose from the table. “My! how deliciously those mycrophylla roses smell! Cut a basketful for me, James! Mrs. Ponsonby has no roses such as these.”

“How you do spoil that old lady!” said Aunt Prissy.

“So I do,” said the Doctor. “She manages me to suit herself. I think it is that head-dress she wears. Nobody could deny anything to a stately old dame in a Letitia Romolino turban.”

Dorothea had slipped from her seat and soon reappeared in her little pink sunbonnet and with basket and scissors. “Maybe Andy will give us some rose geranium and ice-cream flowers,” she said. “He gave me the tea-rose for the butter.”

“She means heliotrope,” explained her mother.

“It has a strong vanilla perfume. But you mustn't leave us, Mr. Winn, because the Doctor is engaged! Spend the day with us.”

The clergyman elected, after a brief pastoral visit to the Scotch gardener, to ride with his host; and the family separated for the various occupations of the day, — Shirley to her piano practising, Miss Prissy to serious preparations for making currant jelly, and the lovely mistress of the mansion to her cares for the general good. The Colonel summoned Dorothea to a writing lesson under the trees, moving thither a small table upon which she placed her little rosewood writing-desk, a recent present from him, given to encourage her in writing, in which she was deemed deficient. This was composition day, and the little maiden felt its importance. “Write anything you please, dear,” said her friend; “write a letter, if you choose.” And he unfolded the *Richmond Whig* and prepared to read confirmation of his own political views.

“I owe a letter to Tom Blackwell,” she informed him; and having carefully examined her quill pen, and presented it to the Colonel to be mended, she gravely addressed herself to her task. After much thought and many pauses she looked up for guidance. “I've got

as far as 'Dear Tom Blackwell Cousin James is here.'"

"You open very well," the Colonel assured her, and she continued her meditations — repeating every few minutes, "Cousin James is here — Cousin James is here — Cousin James is here."

"And sends his goodest love to you," suggested her aunt, who, sunbonneted and leather-gloved, was on her way to the garden.

"Oh!" exclaimed the child, "Tom would be shocked."

"Well, then," said the Colonel, looking over the top of his paper, "write your letter just as you yourself think proper."

After much thought and laborious effort, Dorothea offered the following for his inspection, written in characters in various stages of inebriation and abundantly sprinkled with the fine sand from her tiny "sand-box."

DEER TOM BLAK Q U E DUBLE L

Cusin James is heer Flora has got 3 pupis. Unc'l Isum's Susan has got 2 Twins.

Yore fren,

Dorothea.

"Are you quite clear about the way to spell Blackwell?" asked the Colonel.

"Yes, indeed; Shirley told me at breakfast how to spell 'quell.' I knew how to spell 'black.'"

"That's sufficient! There's no appeal from Shirley, now she is a young lady."

The letter was carefully folded, sealed with a motto wafer with a romantic sentiment, and addressed to Mr. Tom Blackwell, a neighbour's son, who had amused himself by writing to the little girl. Dorothea drew out her coloured beads and proceeded with her daily work on a necklace for her doll Victoria. The Colonel read silently, and finally said, by way of conversational interlude and apropos of an item in the paper: "How would you like to be the Duchess of Westminster?"

"It depends on who is the Duke," the child answered. She was not surprised at the laugh that followed. She was accustomed to having people laugh at her remarks.

After a while her companion perceived she had dropped her beads and was in a brown study. Catching his eye, she inquired, "What does a Duchess do?"

"Pretty much what other ladies do, I imagine — embroider, play on the harp or guitar or piano, and see company. If you ask me what

a Duchess has, I can tell you. She has beautiful manners, and lives in a castle with charming grounds and gardens; and she has many servants and horses and coaches; and wears velvet gowns, and a beautiful crown of strawberry leaves made out of diamonds."

Dorothea was silent, and the Colonel turned over his paper and became absorbed in a glowing account of the newly found treasure among the foot-hills of the Sierras. Presently he felt the child's touch on his knee.

"Is there *obliged* to be a Duke?" she asked earnestly.

"I'm afraid so. — There must have been a Duke somewhere, I suppose; but there *are* Duchesses without any Duke at all."

"Well, then! Why can't I be a Duchess? I live in a castle! I could buy 'most all the things, and could make some. Of course, I couldn't buy a Duke — do you think?" she asked wistfully.

"I'm afraid not," said the Colonel; "I will inquire — but all the other things might be bought. You see you have — usually — beautiful manners, and it is easy to make believe the Duke. Don't you make believe your doll is a Queen? I can say 'Your Grace' when I speak to you and bow low —"

"I can curchy," said Dorothea, eagerly, giving him an illustration of the fact. "Mammy is very petickler about my curchy. She makes me do it in the nursery before I come in the parlour to the comp'ny."

"That is fine! I never saw a better curtsey. But there are other things. A Duchess has to be very kind and gracious, and not contradict nor interrupt when others are talking."

"Pshaw," said Dorothea, "that's easy! Mama has told me all that;" but the Colonel proceeded to make her understand that a Duchess has certain obligations simply from the fact that she *is* a Duchess — that her motto is "*Noblesse oblige*," — and that means that she is called upon to deny herself things allowed humbler people and be at all times high and noble.

Miss Prissy Berkeley now appeared, coming through the garden gate with her arm full of long-stemmed flowers. "Look what I got from Andy!" she exclaimed. "It was like pulling his eye-teeth. You may put me in my cart, James, if you like. I left Milly and her tribe gathering currants. No, indeed, Dorothea! They'll do it quicker without your help. I'll drive over and give these to Betty Oliver! I

like Betty! She and I are the only old maids in the county. No, no, Dolly, not this time; the sun's too hot. Well, then, run in and ask your mother."

"I observe I'm not invited to drive you," said the Colonel.

"No men around when Betty and I forgather," laughed the old lady.

"You don't mean to say you traduce us to each other."

"I can't justly answer for Betty's opinions of men, but you know I adore them. Not that I ever professed to understand a man! He remains a beauty and a mystery to me. — Well, jump in, Dolly! I knew how *that* would end! — and, oh, James," as she took the reins and trotted off, "tell Isham to tell Milly not to do the currants until I come back. Get up, Brandy!"

CHAPTER IV

THE Colonel stood for a moment watching the cart until it was lost under the poplars, and then, with his hands clasped behind him, slowly retraced his steps to the gravelled circle in front of the house. Presently he paused, threw up his fine face, and listened. Shirley was singing. There was nothing impressive in her song, nothing to warrant the Colonel in reverently bending his bared head. Shirley was only practising her solfeggios, running up her scales again and again from the middle C, a tone or half tone higher each time, until the C in *alt* rang out, clear and pure. A moment later, she appeared on the veranda, discerned her listener, and nodded to him, disappeared, and returning with her work-basket and two cushions, joined him under the trees.

“Did you hear me sailing in the high seas?” she asked, as she seated herself and tendered a cushion to the Colonel.

“Indeed I did! But you did not sail far.”

"Signor Laperti had small opinion of my voice — or rather he thought I had a small voice. But he liked the little I have. 'It is *ver* thin, Mees — just a bit of gold thread. Do not strain it! It will break' — and so, when I found that high C in it, I shut it up at once and put it away to rest."

Shirley had opened her basket while she talked, and extracted from its depths a bit of muslin and her embroidery apparatus. The Colonel, declining the proffered cushion for himself, arranged it against the tree at her back, and, clasping his hands around his knees, seated himself at her feet, Shirley drawing aside the ruffles of her white muslin gown — it was a "spacious time" in women's dress — to make room for him.

"This looks like old times," he said, "and I hope it means morning readings." He drew a green paper-covered brochure from his pocket. "The last instalment of 'Dombey and Son'! But 'twould never do to read about Paul and Florence without Dorothea. How about Tennyson?"

"Oh, we had him, plenty, at school. The girls cried quarts over him."

"And you?"

"I couldn't care for him! I suppose you know who is responsible for my taste."

The Colonel laughed and suggested another recent poet who had just written the immortal "Prelude."

"Don't let's read at all," said Shirley. "Let's talk. I haven't had a good, long talk with you since I came home. Don't try to improve my mind, please. It's improved until I don't know it. I doubt whether I have any left."

"I suppose things seem strange after the New York life."

"They do — a little — but, dear! The only trouble is I don't seem to have anything to do, — no duties, no fixed hours. Mama told me to embroider a cape for myself, but I couldn't stand that. Capes don't interest me in the least, so I am making a bretelle apron for Dorothea."

"Did you learn that at school?" asked the Colonel. "Tell me something you did learn that most interested you."

"I learned to be calm — wasn't that something for a Berkeley to learn? We were drilled into a manner all repose. We were not to be emotional if we could help it; if we couldn't, we must be silent. We were not to exclaim or be superlative, never say we were 'crazy' for anything, or 'dying' for our dinner even, as we always were. We were not to express sur-

prise; that was very ungentee — *bourgeois*. If a cannon should happen to explode near us, we were to smile with gentle acquiescence, and remark, 'Yes!' "

The Colonel threw back his head, and broke through all Madame's rules with a hearty peal of laughter. Shirley's mimicry was delightful!

"Did you see what N. P. Willis had about us in the *Mirror*?"

"Not really? How did Madame Cheguéry stand that?"

"Madame was annoyed — but calm. She expressed no emotion. It wasn't so dreadful! He only drew a rhyming pen-picture of 'A Perfect Lady of the Present Time' under some stupendous disaster, earthquake or tempest or shipwreck — I forget which:—

" 'She was calm as the sea — when we sail in June —
As calm as the stars above her!
Calm as a Madame Cheguéry girl —
Only star-eyed science her lover!'"

The Colonel thought this a most excellent training, as exemplified by Shirley, and she continued:—

"We were to be extremely modest and yet not shy — shyness was not at all *comme il faut*. We

were never to 'show off' our learning or accomplishments."

"Rely altogether upon beauty?" interrupted the Colonel.

"Oh, dear me, no! Least of all upon beauty. I had been pretty well drilled by Mammy! 'Come away f'um de glass, honey! You'll spile yo' complexion;' and 'Pretty ain' nothin' — 'haviour is all! Pretty is as pretty does!' and then Mama, — 'Don't long for beauty, my dear! It is the least of all good things.' I think she and Mammy and Madame were quite right! 'Lovely' means so much more than 'pretty.'"

Shirley paused, and spreading her muslin on her knee, regarded it critically, turning her head with a bird-like motion, to examine the effect of her stitchery. Her listener looked at her in silence. Never had the value of beauty been decried by more beautiful lips. Never had calm repose been expressed by serener eyes. Her face, he thought, seemed actually to bloom with thought and feeling. The poor Colonel found himself at a disadvantage. He could find nothing to say. He would have been glad to sit at her feet forever, simply hear her voice, look up into the depths of her soft eyes.

They were certainly troubled eyes at the pres-

ent moment. After turning her work around several times, she said anxiously : "I don't know what is the matter with this morning-glory. It doesn't look a bit natural."

"Is that your idea of a morning-glory?"

"Doesn't it look like one to you? An open morning-glory and a bud! There's to be a spray on each bretelle."

"I have been very much interested in it. At first I thought from its shape it might be a pear, and then after you made those two little knots it looked more like a toad. I am quite sure about that twisted thing! That is a very good worm, indeed."

"Horrors! Why, that's a closed morning-glory bud! Dear me!" said Shirley, in distress.

But the Colonel was not attending. "The glory of the morning," he thought. "She personifies it."

However, Pizarro appeared and closed the interview by announcing, "Miss Shirley, yo' Mammy say you mus' come right in out de sun," and Shirley, followed by the Colonel, immediately obeyed.

Miss Betty Oliver, the neighbourhood dress-maker, fruit-preserved, cake-baker, and gener-

ally useful helper, lived in a small brick house a little off from the road. Extending outward on each side of the house was a thick privet hedge. Her little porch was covered with morning-glories, and her yard was enclosed with box. With infinite toil and patience she had planted the privet hedge years before, extending it to the limits of her small domain that she might conceal her kitchen and outhouses from travellers on the public road. The railroad, however, had defeated her plans and outraged her feelings. It ran in a curve immediately behind her premises, and Miss Betty had the anguish of knowing that hundreds of eyes from the car windows daily inspected her pig-pen, her garden, her clothes-lines, and all of her outhouses. They passed slowly going out, and slowed up on the return — giving ample opportunity for the gratification of idle curiosity. Houses soon gathered around the depot, and the place began to assume the dignity of a village. Hawkins, the depot agent, had brought his family; so had Perkins, the storekeeper. The odour of fertilizers filled the summer air, conquering the perfume of her mock orange and pinks! All this she told for the hundredth — nay, the thousandth — time to her kind listener.

“I haven’t a decent petticoat in the world,” she declared. “They are all over mildew that’ll never come out. I have to whip my things off the lines in a hurry when I hear them cars comin’, and by the time I get them back again, here comes a train from the other direction. Of course the clothes lie damp and mildew. As to my nightgowns and shimmys, I never hang them out until night, and then the switchmen walk up and down with lanterns an’ often as not there’s moonlight. I did ask Hawkins if the curtains couldn’t be kept down my side when the trains passed my garden — and he said, ‘Certainly — and we might print a notice on large cards with “Look the other way” in big letters, and hang it up every time the trains go out and come in.’ Then I saw he was making fun of me, and I felt too insulted to say another word to him. I was willin’ to pay for the trouble about the curtains and pay lib’ral, but Hawkins couldn’t see his way to speak to the conductors about it. No, Miss Prissy! I’ve lived a decent woman with good clothes all my life, and a decent woman I aim to die — but the good Lord knows if He called me to go this minute, you wouldn’t find a white nightgown to put on me while my shroud was a-making.”

“Ah well, our Lord would never look at the gown,” said Miss Prissy. “Try not to think too much about it. Have you been to the store for your paper this morning?”

“No, indeed; I never go there! I send for my paper, since Hawkins was so impudent. I don't mean to know them Perkinses and Hawkineses! I'll pass the time of day if I meet 'em in the road, — that's my Christian duty, and that I'll do. And I won't sew for 'em neither! I say — and you know it's the truth, Miss Prissy — that Mrs. Berkeley gives me about all I can do.”

“Well, then,” said Miss Prissy, anxious for a diversion from the worn topic, “maybe you haven't heard that Patty Benson was married to Jerry Wilson this morning!”

“My *gracious goodness* — no! Well — *well* — *well!* Of all the close-mouthed! Why, that girl was here yesterday evening late, for me to fix her brown alpaca! It sagged to one side. She never said a word about anything but her frock. I remember now I offered to take off the facing and skirt-braid and do it right, but she said no — she was in a hurry — just to raise it from the belt. I made that one frock as a special favour. I never sew for that family. Indeed, I'm never asked to.”

"Well," said Miss Prissy, — pressing her advantage, and steering quite away from the scandalous behaviour of the railway cars, — "we all feel badly at the Castle because we have not been more neighbourly with them. Charles is so kind-hearted! And he thinks they are poor."

"Well, you know," said Miss Betty, lowering her voice with an air of mystery, "there are them that says they'd be as rich as anybody in the county if they had their rights. Of course I never talk after Mrs. Dancey, but she is one of the few women who visits Mrs. Benson and she says —"

"Sh — sh! for goodness' sake!" Miss Prissy begged, "don't listen to Mrs. Dancey! Don't encourage her to bring up that old story and have the neighbourhood stirred up again over it. It was settled years ago. When we don't understand the rulings in such cases, we may be sure we don't know all the circumstances. Very few people remember, or if they do, they are silent. Charles has always felt the greatest sympathy for Mr. Benson."

"Well, don't you suppose the boys know?"

"Certainly not," said Miss Prissy, decidedly, "who would tell them? They weren't born

when it happened. If they knew, they would help."

"They'd better not offer it! *He* isn't poor. He's just terribly proud and surly. He's been a good manager. My! I can't get over that Patty comin' here every day or two and me lending her all my patterns. Staid to supper, too, last night, and as hearty as a hunter. Well, well! Strange things are happening these days. Some folks think it's the comet. I wonder if it is! If my poor father could know I was livin' here with a railroad runnin' in my back yard, and them Perkinses and Hawkinses not a stone's throw away from me and young girls marryin' on the sudden like that — he would turn over in his grave."

"Let us be thankful he doesn't know it," said Miss Prissy, gently; and Patty Benson, having served her purpose, was dismissed for friendly talk about the latest fashions in sleeves as exhibited in *Godey's Magazine*, and the best method of sealing currant jelly so it would not granulate nor ferment. Little Dorothea was recalled from the garden whither she had been sent to gather Calicanthus — "for I bet," said Miss Betty, "that Scotchman of the Doctor's has dug it all up in your garden;" — and after promises

exacted that she would soon come to help Miss Shirley get ready for the Springs, and after much appreciation on Dorothea's part of hot buttered paste-cakes and preserved raspberries, Brandy was relieved of an hour's struggle with the flies, and sent trotting homeward, signalling as he neared his stable to his comrade in harness, Soda, and receiving unmistakable assurances of welcome in return.

CHAPTER V

WHEN Miss Prissy and Dorothea reached home after their visit to Miss Betty Oliver, they were met at the gate by the Colonel, who had been waiting for them half an hour — with the tidings that company had arrived to “spend some time” — which might mean a week or more, as further determined.

“We have eight in all, — Mrs. Carrington and Miss Elvira, Rosalie Henry, Anne Page, Mildred Taylor, Tom Blackwell, Douglas Newton, and a fine-looking fellow, a guest at the Newtons’, whose name I don’t at the moment recall.”

“Where is Mary going to put them? You know others are expected any day.”

“I take two of the youngsters to my quarters.”

“Then where am I to go?” wailed Dorothea. “Where will I say my lessons when it rains, and keep my cat, and roast my June apples?”

“Ah, Your Grace! Where, indeed! But no harm shall come to Gabriella — those intruders shall treat her with proper respect — and June apples are not good roasted.”

“Never mind, Dolly dear,” said Miss Prissy. “Company or no company, my currants are gathered and must be attended to. I’ll need all the help you can give me. Run along and tell Milly I will make the jelly under the big tree behind the kitchen. Hurry, Pizarro, and put the charcoal furnace out there and a table and chair — two chairs. Don’t wait to drive Brandy to the stable; the Colonel will attend to him.”

The Doctor arrived just at the moment, and considered the situation.

“Mary thinks we are weak in beaux,” he said. “Newton is said to be in love with Anne Page, Blackwell is certainly engaged to Rosalie — they’ll be no good to any one else, and there’s Elvira Carrington and Mildred Taylor, to say nothing of Shirley. It is well we have you, James, but you are not a dancing man.”

“Cousin James belongs to me,” exclaimed Dorothea.

“True — ‘belongs’ is the word! But Your Grace might lend me. Duchesses sometimes lend their vassals to a weaker party.”

The child considered: “Only to Aunt Prissy, then!”

“I accept him with pleasure,” said the old

lady. "He will interest me very much. I was his mother's bridesmaid."

"I wish you would jump in the buggy, James," said the Doctor, "and ride over to Ridgely and bring the Edmunds boys for a day or two. They've slept on pallets on the parlour floor many a time before. So, for that matter, have Tom and Douglas. There's plenty of room, even if the Taylors and Flemings come, as we expect."

In a few hours the house was full of gay young guests, and humming like a hive of bees. Things quieted down in the afternoon, — the young people having gone forth on horseback to make a visit to a neighbour. The activities of the household were confined to the rear, and all was quiet in front. At sunset the gardener appeared at the gate, wheeling a barrow, with sprinkling-pot, light hoe, shears, and trowel — his own coat neatly folded on the top. He was a quaint figure, slow and deliberate in his movements, but his rolled-up shirt-sleeves revealed a muscular arm, and his face expressed keen shrewdness. Like many persons who live much alone, he talked to himself as he worked — and for the excellent reason, which is often given, that he liked to hear a sensible man talk.

"A hot night," he was saying as he deposited

his coat in the cleft of a tree. "But I'll tak nae chances in this changefu' climate." He then proceeded to examine the choice flowers that filled the circle enclosing the grass-plot — rid them of insects and carefully water them.

"Eh! what's this?" he exclaimed with disgust, "the vara best out-shoot of the Luxemburg Rose broken! The hoof of a Bull o' Bashan! I'se warrand it's the stranger or his servitor. The familiars o' the family frae year's end to year's end hae mair sense."

That the stranger's negro "servitor" felt an interest in flowers was soon evident. He was at that moment on his way from the house to the lawn, walking with a jaunty air of ease and flourish, bringing into play all the muscles of his body. The gardener quickly recognized him, and concentrated his attention upon a shrub at his feet.

"Good evening, Andy," said the new-comer, with the assured manner of the valet of a man of fashion. As he received no sign of recognition he repeated in a louder tone, "Good evening, Andy. Good evening!"

"Oh, guid e'en, guid e'en t'ye — whamever ye be," replied the gardener, without looking up.

“I prognosticated you would not know me! I am valet to Mr. Frederick Blake and — ”

The gardener raised his head as if to see who spoke to him, touched his Scotch cap with a mock show of respect, and bowed low.

“An’ are ye a’ that? I dinna ken rightly the meaning o’ ‘valet.’ It’s maybe a running foot-man, or summat atween a boot-black and a gentleman’s gentleman? What might be your name noo?”

“My name? To you my name is Mr. Napoleon Johnson, called ‘Nap’ by my master, for short.”

“An’ to ye, *my* name is Mr. Angus Macgillcuddy, called ‘Andy’ by my young leddy and ithers to wham I give the preevilege. Body an’ saul, mon, *what* are ye doing?” for Mr. Napoleon Johnson in his confusion had picked up the sprinkling-pot and was using it on the border-flowers.

“Now ye have wat the Dianthus while it was all het up with the sunshine! It’ll be as black as yer ain — God forgie me! Awa’ wi’ ye to yer valeting! The suner the mair fitting! I’ll not compleen to lose ye!”

Thoroughly discomfited, the intruder put down the watering-pot, giggling, and relapsed into the vernacular. “He, he! What does de pinks do

when it rains? Does dey hist umbrellas, an' does you stan' by an' hole 'em over 'em?"

With this parting shot he turned, and ambled, crestfallen, to the house.

The gardener put his hands on his hips and grinned as he looked after him. "He maybe is no a bad lad after a' said," he reflected. "Forbye his black skin, he may be guid aneugh for his station. An' if his master can thole his ways an' manners, Angus has na call to compleen. Am tauld they're no Papishers — thae blacks. The creature Isum an' his women are Baptists. There's ne'er a Roman amang them. Sae I'll e'en put up wi' him as I put up wi' sae muckle from the family — breaking great boughs an' branches o' roses when a short stem wad be mair mensefu', and never leaving a bloom on the bush half a day in garden or greenhouse. As to the fruit, weel! weel! They are a fasheous bargain, these Southron leddies, — calling for peers, plums, an' apples summer an' winter. It's weel ken'd that Adam's rib loves apples — Gude help 'em!"

But the twilight, delicious but damp, was at hand, and he hastened with his work. Presently the riding party appeared in the avenue, Shirley and the new guest at their head. Slipping lightly

from her horse, she called out cheerfully: "Ah, Andy! See! I did not forget you! I've brought you the 'emblem dear' —"

"'Symbol,' my young leddy, — 'I turned the weeding clip aside, and spared the symbol dear.'"

"'Et tu, Brute,'" laughed the girl, as she gave him a fine thistle bloom, which he promptly fastened in his Scotch cap, — "With Papa in the house and Andy in the garden, I shall probably learn to talk after a while."

"May you have a better teacher than either," replied her escort, lowering his voice with a meaning look that called for a blush as he expected, and meeting only an expression of absolute unconsciousness. Madame Cheguéry's pupil did her credit.

The gardener looked after them and shook his head. "Anither clan a'thegither," he murmured, and began to collect his dibbles, hoes, and watering-pot. But the new guest had turned at the door and was forging down the walk at a rapid pace, — going out for a short "constitutional" before dressing for the evening. Reaching a spot opposite the gardener, — he had followed the path on the other side of the circle, — he thrust a hasty hand into his breast pocket and drew out his handkerchief and a

small silver match-box. Pausing a moment and hollowing his hands over the flame, he lighted a cigar, threw away the match, and strode on. He had passed through the gate when a thin thread of smoke arrested Andy's attention.

"Body an' saul! the daft skellum!" he exclaimed in great wrath. "Threw his de'il's fire right into the heart of the rosa Devoniansis! May the foul fiend — Eh! what's this? a bit paper oot o' his pocket — H'm!" and stroking his chin, he looked thoughtfully at a rose-coloured billet which he picked up from the border. Raising it cautiously to his nose, he inhaled its delicate perfume. With the subtle odour temptation sought, found, and floored poor Andy! He wiped his hand on the sleeve of his shirt and unfolded the missive. A dry smile broke over his features.

"Oh, the snares and temptations o' this wicked world! The de'il's work is ower a', and —" but glancing down the avenue he perceived the stranger returning. Reaching hastily for his coat, he slipped the note into a pocket, and then leisurely proceeded to pull down his shirt-sleeves and don the outer garment.

"Good-evening, my good man! May I look

into your bushes a moment? You didn't happen to see a small bit of paper, did you?"

Andy could not tell a lie. He proceeded slowly to fill his barrow with his tools, and as he lifted the handles to move off, said quietly, "Ye may look and welcome, sir! I maun be ganging in to pit my airns under cover, — or I'd be blithe to help ye. I'll stop e'en now if ye hae lost siller or value."

"Not at all! Only a small bill for newspapers at your little store yonder. I guess my man will send another. It's of no consequence whatever."

The gardener, as he passed along the path on the outside of the yard-paling, could see the searcher busy among the shrubs all around the yard. Shaking his head from time to time, he reached the little house allotted to him near the garden. Once within it, his tools cleansed and put away, and his frugal supper of oaten cake and "kail-brose" eaten, he addressed himself to his evening task of introspection and religious reading, as prescribed in his early days by the Scottish kirk. He recalled the incident of the evening, and carefully re-read the note. "I misdoubt," he said to himself, "I hae been guided according to my folly. Instead of hale-

some and godly meditation at the sma' hour o' the sunset — whilk sud remind us of our latter end — I forgather with a black, wha hasna a glisk o' sense; and listen to his fule clinkum-clankum. And the de'il, going aboot like a roaring lion seeking wham he may devour, pits a bonny bit letter anent my hand, and gars me read it and keep it. I suld hae been dubious o' opening it till I had gaen through the e'ening worship. But it's a' dune now, and canna be helpit. I doubt I maun gang oop to the hoose and gie him his ain. He'll maybe hae the sense to recognize my honest service."

Just then the high notes of a fine tenor voice floated through the open window. He was accustomed to the evening sounds of guitar or piano, and often listened to the singing, but something in this strain angered him.

"He's a wild lad that, and hasna the right to sing his fule sangs to my young leddy. I mistrust no guid will come o' his veesit. Na, na, Andy! It's nowt thy duty to gie him his light-o-luve letter! Keep it, lad! It may be called upo' to rise in judgment! Wha be ye to resist the Almighty, and refuse to be a rod in his hand to smite the evil-doer?"

Thus having determined the line of his duty,

the gardener finished the exercises of the hour, by reading in a volume of dry controversial divinity; and then shutting out the convivial sounds from the house, he commended himself to the God of his fathers, and his tired body was soon as fast asleep as his conscience.

CHAPTER VI

EARLY next morning Shirley, looking in her pink muslin gown as if made out of roses, left her bedroom, and passing through the central hallway, entered the long veranda in the rear of the house. She might well pause to admire the scene before her. The garden, enclosed by a hedge of box trimmed to simulate a twisted rope, descended in shallow terraces to the foot of the hill, and fringed with flag and iris a stream which shone in the morning sun like a ribbon of silver. Beyond, the ground rose again — covered at its foot with thick reeds and grasses, which halfway up lost themselves in the woods. Nearer, she could discern the box-bordered crescents, stars, and serpentine hedges of the formal English garden, the tall *crêpe* myrtles, the climbing roses on the central “summer-house” of latticework, and the arch of yellow jessamine that spanned the entrance. Every blade of grass at her feet held a diamond. The flowers bent their heads under the heavy dew — to lift them later in renewed beauty. Over all,

the splendid morning sun poured its golden rays. The girl saw and appreciated it all — and as she stood she drew long breaths of freshness, sweetness, and perfume.

She had tied an ample muslin apron over her gown, and now turning up the lace-trimmed edges of her flowing sleeves, she proceeded to the end of the long veranda where a basket of flowers had been placed on a table, together with a row of bowls and vases of china and crystal. She was examining the flowers thoughtfully, when a handsome, dark-eyed young man appeared at the door of the hall and walked rapidly down the veranda, exclaiming, with a radiant smile, "Proserpine amid the flowers — herself a fairer —"

"Ah, Douglas! Good morning! Isn't it a lovely day? I think Anne will be down sometime in the course of human events."

"Meanwhile I might help you fill your vases?"

"I don't know," said the girl, considering, with averted head. "Probably you'll see a fine rose at the bottom of the basket, — lovely enough for Anne, — and you'll ruin all the others as you drag it out."

"No, no, I promise, honour bright."

"Or you'll fall to dreaming about somebody

who is expected every minute, and you'll put purple heliotrope and crimson geraniums together in the same vase. It is positively against all rules to mix colours."

"At least perhaps I may be permitted to pour out the flowers on the table so you can select better," he said, as he lifted the basket, "and I might even be allowed to take off all the thorns and hand the roses to you to arrange."

"It hurts roses to be handled! They can't bear it! They want all the dew left on them as long as possible. And besides, Anne —"

"Now look here, Shirley! Are you going to keep this up? If you are, I shall order my horse directly after breakfast — or before."

"A thousand pardons, Douglas! Help me arrange my flowers if you want to. I am quite willing Anne should have the prettiest. Indeed, I'll help you to find it. By the bye," she added, "what is your taste in boutonnières?"

The young fellow's face brightened. "Oh, thank you! I like a geranium leaf and a red rose."

"That is very beautiful. But don't you think a pink carnation would suit Mr. Blake's blue eyes better?"

"Undoubtedly," said her companion, coldly.

— “The pink carnation by all means! But why are you laying aside those curious pink flowers? Are all of them for Mr. Blake’s blue eyes?”

“These? This is the *Dicentra Spectabilis* — bleeding-hearts. They make a lovely hanging basket, with their drooping stems. There’s a hook in the library window expressly for a hanging basket — and dear knows, these would be appropriate! There are plenty of bleeding hearts represented on the book-shelves. What are you doing, Douglas? Cutting my bleeding-hearts to pieces?”

“Only shortening a stem for my own boutonnière. But I interrupt you. Your carnation is a great success. Accept my congratulations!”

He fastened his “bleeding-heart” in the lapel of his coat, and excusing himself with a cold bow, turned and walked out of the veranda.

Shirley was pained and surprised. She looked at him as he strode along, and had he looked back, would have recalled him. She was vexed with herself for having taken a liberty with him, and trifling perhaps with feelings he held sacred. Engagements were jealously concealed in Virginia at that day, but nobody seemed to doubt that he was in love with Anne Page any more

than that Tom Blackwell was engaged to Rosalie. "He might at least," thought Shirley, "have confided in me. Why should he avoid me as he has done this summer?" She shook her head regretfully, and felt she had made a bad beginning of the day. She continued her task mechanically until her vases were all full, and calling Minerva, directed where they should be placed on mantels and pier-tables, sending a bowl with the finest roses to the breakfast room, and slipping the boutonnière of pink carnations into her pocket.

In warm climates the cream of the day is the early morning, and few are willing to lose it in bed. All nature seems refreshed and jubilant. The birds are in ecstasy — robin, lark, and thrush pouring out their pæans of praise and gratitude, and the tuneful tiny wrens — all song and no body — almost splitting their little throats with joy. The guests at Berkeley Castle responded promptly when breakfast was announced, — all except Douglas Newton, who entered later and took the vacant chair beside Anne Page, which seemed, by tacit agreement, to be left for him. Glancing around the table, he perceived that Shirley had seated herself on one side of the Colonel — Dorothea was on

the other side — and displayed in the Colonel's buttonhole was the fine pink carnation !

“A sight for sair e'en, Cousin Ellen,” said the Doctor to Mrs. Carrington at his right hand. “The beautiful girls and the bowl of roses ! Don't you think Shirley looks like her mother ?”

His friend smiled, but shook her head.

“Too much Berkeley ? I am afraid so. But the Berkeley nose on Shirley doesn't seem to me a bit too high.”

“Shirley is perfect, exquisite,” said Mrs. Carrington. “I think most people would consider her more beautiful than her mother at her age — but Mary, you know, — Mary Blair was angelic — ineffable.”

“Well — I only hope my girls will be half as good as their mother ! See ! She knows we are talking about her. My coffee, please, Mary, after Mrs. Carrington ! You young people must indulge me. I must hurry. Old Mrs. Ponsonby's man was here at day-dawn. The old lady imagines she is worse. No doctor needed here — that is evident ! You must all have a pleasant day and don't wear out your voice, Mr. Blake, before I return ! I shall ask for some of your fine music this evening. Let me speak to you a moment, James ?”

"What is it, Charlie? Anything for me to do?" asked the Colonel, at the front door.

"I wish you would find out what ails Douglas Newton. He looks pale and miserable. I particularly wish him to enjoy his visit here."

"Lover's quarrel with Anne, perhaps."

"They may have quarrelled, for aught I know to the contrary, but it looks like chills to me. He might have an ague before I return. You will find quinine powders in the office. The jar is labelled. Dose him pretty liberally all the morning; 'twon't hurt him."

Returning to the breakfast room, the Colonel found that Dorothea had become the centre of attraction. Rosalie had leaned across the table and said, "I understand, Dolly, that you correspond with Mr. Blackwell."

"He wrote to me first," said Dorothea, apologetically.

"Ah! I hope his letter was interesting?"

"He didn't tell me anything; Cousin James said it was just a love-letter. Did he ever write to you, Cousin Rosalie?"

"To me? Well — occasionally — yes."

"Then you know the kind of love-letters he writes," said Dorothea, dismissing the subject, and buttering her muffin.

“Tell me what kind you wrote to him,” said Rosalie.

Mr. Blackwell hastily essayed to interpose, but Dorothea answered, “Oh, I wrote him a very intrusting letter indeed! I told him all the family news — I mean about Flora’s family and Uncle Isham’s Susan,” adding, as she perceived amusement on every face except Rosalie’s and Mr. Blackwell’s, “Cousin James said I must excuse Tom, because he is so young. You won’t write love-letters when you’re older, will you, Tom?”

“Don’t be too hard on me, Dolly!” But just then the Colonel entered, and Dorothea, feeling that he always understood her, nestled to him and proceeded comfortably with her breakfast, without further interest in Mr. Blackwell or his letters. She knew that young people rarely talked to her seriously and sensibly, as her Cousin James always talked. She was simply a “medium” through which they communicated with each other — and this always embarrassed her. So when, after breakfast, Mr. Blackwell put his arm around her and began to complain of her unkindness and demand indemnity therefor, she was fully aware he had some ulterior motive.

“To think, Dolly, you should go back on me in

this way and before everybody, too! And I had just learned such a lovely little boy's song to teach you! All about a little girl, too, and now —"

"And now," said Rosalie, "you are to teach us girls, great and small, your song — I dote on children's songs. Come, Little Boy Blue, and 'blow me your horn'!"

Dorothea was silent. She waited, knowing she would get the song without committing herself to further complications, and Mr. Blackwell chanted in a low tone:—

"Pretty little Pink, I used to think, that you and I
would marry,
But now I have no hopes of you, I can no longer tarry.
I'll put my knapsack on my back, my musket on my
shoulder —
And march away to Mexico, and be a gallant soldier.
There money grows on white oak trees — the rivers flow
with brandy,
The streets all paved with ginger-cakes — the girls all
sweet as candy."

"Fine fellow," said Rosalie; "a brave thing to do — especially now that all the fighting in Mexico is over."

"He had, at least, the impulses of a patriot," Tom protested. "He was willing to give his life

for his country. What was his life worth to him? The lady he loved had been unkind."

"No, no!" exclaimed Dorothea, earnestly. "It was not at all for love of the pretty lady! He was going to Mexico to get the money and brandy and ginger-cakes."

"True, Dorothea, perfectly true," said Rosalie. "If she had been kind, he would have remained comfortably at home and allowed other men to do his fighting for him. He should have gone all the sooner had she been kind — gone for her sake. Don't you think so, Dolly?"

But Dorothea did not know just what to say. Her friend Tom, she perceived, was at a disadvantage, and she was sorry for him. She would not commit herself. Still there was "Cousin Rosalie" to be considered. She had heard much discussion about the Mexican War, in which she was keenly interested, and she proudly remembered that General Scott was a friend of the family, — had been her father's "best man" in fact. Doubtless Rosalie had the best of the discussion. One thing was clear: everybody should have helped in time of war. She hastened to vindicate the Colonel.

"Cousin James would have gone for the sake of a dear lady," she explained, "but you see he

didn't have one. I was very little then. He knew about a lovely lady once, but she was not *his* lady."

"Ah! Are we quite sure it was not his lady?" Tom asked, "and was there a war in her day?"

"Yes," said Dorothea, "and she wanted her lover to stay with her, but he went to the wars because he thought *her* friend should be brave and noble. He said, 'I could not love thee, dear, so much, loved I not honour more.'"

Tom clapped his hands in triumph. "Thank you, Dolly! If my memory serves, he went to the war and was captured and imprisoned, and when he returned, the fair Lucasta had married a man who staid at home. That settles it! If you leave the lady a minute, you lose her."

"Now what are you puzzling my little duchess about?" said the Colonel, as he drew up a chair and lifted Dorothea to his knee. The child threw an arm around his neck and was about to explain, when he raised his hand for silence. The "small voice, the thread of gold!" Shirley was singing to her guitar under the trees, her guests around her:—

"Youth must with Time decay —
Beauty must fade away."

The Colonel smiled, but his face grew grave with feeling at the next words : —

“Castles are sacked in war —
Chieftains are scattered far —
Truth is a fixed star !”

“Isn't it ‘Love’ in the song ?” said Tom,
“‘Love is a fixed star’ ?”

“They are one and the same,” said the Colonel, as he put Dorothea from his knee, and went with her to find Douglas Newton.

“Do you know,” said Rosalie, “I've a notion that Colonel Jones has had a desperate love affair in his youth ! Did you notice his uplifted, far-away look ?”

“His memory must be good if he recalls it,” Mr. Blackwell opined. “Why, he cannot be a day less than thirty-five.”

“He'd make a nice lover,” Rosalie remarked. “Do you observe that Shirley always wears pink wild roses at breakfast ? The Colonel gathers the closed buds every evening, cuts off all the thorns, and they open beautifully, expressly for her. Those delicate attentions are very captivating — so much better than everlasting compliments.” She had made Tom feel himself eclipsed, and enjoyed it.

When the Colonel attempted to administer the prophylactic prescribed by Dr. Berkeley, young Newton stoutly rebelled. "Chill?" Yes. He confessed he had felt decided chill in the early morning, but it had been through his own fault. He'd know how to avoid it a second time! However, he would accept the quinine — keep the powders in his pocket and use them if necessary. He supposed he ought, if he had any sense, to go home; but there was Blake, his guest, who anticipated so much pleasure from his visit, and for whom the surprise party to the Berkeleys' had been arranged by Mrs. Carrington. They all wanted Blake, who boasted of the hospitality he had enjoyed in England, to see the best Virginia could afford. All this he represented to the Colonel, who assured him of Mr. Blake's cordial welcome.

There could never be the slightest question as to the happiness of young people gathered for a visit to Berkeley Castle. Every resource of every member of the family was for the time devoted to them. If the weather was propitious, they lived out of doors until the heat drove them within. Outside the gravelled walk in front, and on either side in the enclosed yard, had been planted, years before, a circle of slender cedars, —

a fashion borrowed from the Indians,—trained to grow evenly and tall, the foliage shaven closely within and without until it was like a smooth green wall. The cedars were tied together at the top, and when weighted, gave a mosque-like effect to the little shelter. Rustic seats were placed within, chairs and cushions provided, and thither the young people repaired in couples with a book to be read aloud, or with flute and guitar in companies of three or four, to enjoy the cool, clean spot, fragrant with resinous cedar, and free from the insects and caterpillars that infested the rose arbour. On one side of the yard a large stone jutted out, and had been left when the house was built to be removed at “some convenient time”; but the time of leisure for such an undertaking had never come. Mrs. Berkeley had caused the earth to be hollowed out beneath the sheltering stone, and what with a paving of shells and pebbles, and clever training of flowering vines, a grotto, deliciously cool, had been achieved.

Young people, after all, are only overgrown children. We are apt to consider them childish, but two or three years before, they have been really children; and such “cunning” nooks and corners are always to their taste. “Can you tell

me," said Miss Prissy, "why these girls had rather sit on the stairs or the newel-post, or the edge of a table or the arm of a chair than in a good seat like Christian folk?"

"Because," said Mrs. Carrington, "they were children only day before yesterday and 'played house.'"

However that may be, when the dear little God of Love looks around, prospecting, for suitable *entourage* for his manœuvres, he always chooses just such nooks and corners as were provided at Berkeley Castle. Only lately had he feloniously used a cedar arbour in a neighbour's ground for one of his unreasonable and mischievous plans. A beautiful daughter of the house had been forbidden to receive, much less marry, the man the little deity had selected for her. Cupid is resourceful, and his confidence in his own wisdom is his prime characteristic. The pretty Alice, hitherto shrinking, timid, and discreet, changed gowns with her maid, and garbed in linsey-woolsey, with a pail on her head, passed in the early morning through her parents' bedroom opening into her own, and joined her lover in the cedar arbour, — the arbour they had planted on her birthday and trained with infinite pains for her pleasure.

On this morning, Shirley, accompanied by Minerva with rugs and pillows, entered upon the daily task of arranging the arbours for the day. She had finished these and sent Minerva to the house across the lawn while she examined the grotto to see if it was in perfect order, with no traces of snails or slugs, when Mr. Blake appeared and begged for "just a minute — one little minute" — with him, that he might get acquainted with the charming spot.

"It was an object of my curiosity yesterday," he said. "To-day it is not a nymph-haunted grotto — it is a temple, and I worship my goddess." And mockingly falling on one knee, he clasped his hands and assumed an air of rapt devotion. Shirley smiled down upon the worshipper as she sat enthroned on a high rustic chair, and just at the moment Douglas Newton passed, walking with Elvira, who whispered, "We won't tell, will we?" She perfectly well understood these little play-acting scenes, and was surprised to find young Newton flushing furiously. "The impertinent —" he exclaimed, but immediately controlled himself, and said coolly: "Of course not. Every man has his rights."

"And every woman, too," said Elvira. She understood at once, and resented his attitude —

“and if Shirley Berkeley hasn't the right to homage, I don't know who has.”

But her companion had not heard her. With his handsome brows knitted he was trying to pull himself together and face an unexpected state of things. The grotto! To him it had been a sacred spot. Why had he ever brought that mocking man of the world to profane it? When he was a lad, he had been permitted to come daily to Berkeley Castle that he might be “coached” for the university by Shirley's tutor. He could remember Sabbath mornings when there was no preaching at St. Martin's, and Shirley and he would read the services together in the grotto; and when he was away at the University or travelling abroad, he had often recalled this, imagined her little white-robed figure, reading them perhaps with Dorothea, and whispered reverently:—

“Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remembered!”

He could not recall one hour in which he had not loved her. As he strode in silence beside his companion, Elvira looked at him curiously.

“Dear old Shirley has caught them both, I reckon,” she thought; “Anne will have to look

out! I wonder if she'll take either! My! But how Douglas has improved since he travelled. Upon my word, I believe he's the best-looking man I know. Give me a dark man every time. No blue eyes for me!"

The day, so unfortunately begun, was no prophecy of the days that followed. Never were young people so busy and gay! One day it rained incessantly, and they danced polkas; played dominoes; "graces," an old-fashioned game, with hoops and sticks; battledore and shuttlecock; and sang no end of Moore's and Byron's beautiful words set to the old folk-songs of Scotland. The tender grace of melancholy was the favourite of the hour — hopeless love, exile, mournful retrospection, sighs of the captive, broken hearts, despair; these were dictated by fashion as suitable subjects for the songs of polite society, — and only perfectly happy people could have borne to sing them! The Captive Knight who sees his comrades pass, but too distant to be reached and released by them; the exiled maiden dying for her Swiss mountains! But the song that rent the tender hearts of these youthful men and maidens was the "Carrier Dove." How they swelled with pitiful sympathy at the words of the captive lover,

doomed for life, as he gave to the air the Dove with the message under its wing.

“I can bear in a dungeon to waste away youth,
I can fall by the conqueror's sword,
But I cannot endure she should doubt my truth!”

After all none could equal in intensity of passionate despair the “Good-bye” of Tosti in our own day — that cry of anguish with which we are wont to enliven our afternoon teas! Strange! Is it that we need a bitter drop to give zest to an over-sweet cup? The death's head at the feast never seems to have forbidden the revelry; the sword of Damocles doubtless interfered with the digestion of the monarch, but we do not read that it drove him from the banquet-hall.

The story of the week at Berkeley Castle affords but a slight sketch of summer social life in old Virginia. The old-fashioned hospitality for which she was famous sixty years ago deserves more than a passing notice. Few survive who remember it, and praiseworthy as are the efforts of the young writers of the present day to imagine and picture it, few succeed in making the old time live again — so widely different from any that will ever succeed it.

A very slight acquaintance was considered

sufficient warrant for a visit of three or more days; and sometimes the casual visitor, like a wind-blown seed, would fasten, take root, and become a fixture for an entire summer. This was often the case in Virginia — the Virginia of the warm heart and the open hand. There could be found in every community some delightful, cheery, thriftless ne'er-do-weel who loved his fellow-man, but was quite too poor to entertain him, and whose heart would have been broken had he thought himself purposely left out in the sending of invitations "to spend the summer." If he did happen to find himself forgotten, why, that was surely an oversight! He would arrive, all the same, with the rest, be welcomed as warmly and take his place as confidently as any of them.

An invitation sixty years ago would often read thus: "You must come early in June and spend the summer." The great, rambling old country house, sprouting all over with rooms that had been added as needed to the original structure, would, about the middle of July, exhibit symptoms of bursting. Attracted by the fun, the neighbouring lads and lassies would come for a visit of a few days, and, as every available corner was already filled, beds would be nightly or, rather,

midnightly laid upon the drawing-room floor. Everybody in the neighbourhood gave a dinner-party to everybody else. On such occasions the guests would arrive about eleven in the morning, dine at three, and drive home singing in the moonlight.

Conversation, one must confess, was rather stilted; certainly it was literary, very complimentary, and absolutely free from personal gossip. The dinners were wonderful: fish, poultry, game, roast, and every conceivable combination of cream and sugar; every preserved fruit known to civilization; wondrous wreaths cut from green melon rinds, delicious in translucent syrup and served in crystal dishes wreathed with roses. Garlands of running cedar festooned the walls, the cup of each silver candlestick held its own posy, plummy asparagus filled the ample fireplaces, bowls of roses gleamed from every corner and adorned every table. In the midst of all this bloom and beauty healths were pledged in old Madeira, and in tall glasses crowned with "the herb that grows on the graves of good Virginians." The floors were waxed, the little piano was in tune, and there was a dance in the afternoon. As the shadows lengthened somebody would sing, "When twilight dews are falling fast," or the

young men, smoking on the veranda, would improvise verses, and "Vive l'Amour" be given with a rousing chorus.

On these occasions the girls wore their smartest India muslins, tuned their guitars, and furbished up something to recite: selections from "Lalla Rookh," or the new genius, Tennyson. Visits were made to the grottos and rose-clad summer-houses, and to admire the treasures of the conservatory, with its orange and lemon trees and flaming pomegranates. All the servants, all the children, all the old people, contributed to the joy of the time; and if some natural languor ensued from so prolonged a season of gayety, the universal sentiment was that so well expressed by "The Shaughran," — "Begorra, 'twas worth it!"

Of course, these summer house-parties would ebb back to the city in winter, when our hospitable country friends would come to spend a month or two in town. But nothing, — no dinners, balls, or theatres, not even "the celebrated preacher," — nothing could begin to equal the glorious time in the big country houses. I can remember naught but happiness connected with these house-parties. I cannot recall any selfish struggling for social preëminence, any inequality through

respect for wealth, any mean jealousies or heart-burnings. Kind souls would sometimes be afflicted because it was not possible for one beauty to marry all her lovers ; but then she could promise to, and appear to keep her word at least for the summer, and thus things were softened and made more comfortable. Happy days ! Sunny days, perfumed with roses ! Starlit nights, and "Moons of Villon," seeming in our dreams so much fairer than the moons of to-day !

The little party about to separate had reason, all their lives, to remember the week they had spent together at Berkeley Castle. The years yet to come were to be ordered by emotions and impulses, the keynote of which was struck that first morning of their visit. Mr. Blake affected to have surrendered at once. He was handsome and agreeable, with the bearing of an accomplished man of the world. He devoted himself exclusively to Shirley, and openly seemed to press his suit with vigour. He was the honoured guest — the "gentleman from the North," who had visited England and the continent. Nobody questioned his antecedents, but all would have liked to learn his politics. However, he did not intrude them, and always — he was a guest ! There were plenty of subjects for conversation

without touching the crucial Wilmot proviso. There were the stories of the new El Dorado of the world, coming after a journey of forty days in the mail-bags, — stories which were accepted with fervid belief. A rainbow had spanned the continent, and the pot of gold been found at its end. Said De Quincey, "California is going ahead at a rate that beats Sinbad and Gulliver. It all reads like a page from the 'Arabian Nights.'" Then the brilliant triumphs of our flag in Mexico were still recent. Songs born of the times and the recent campaigns, military and political, challenged attention as well as exiled maidens, captive knights, and forlorn lovers. Just below the horizon even then was trembling the cloud destined to burst in fury upon old Virginia, and the young men and maidens who sang and danced away the summer days proved themselves stout of heart to meet it.

CHAPTER VII

ON the last day of Mrs. Carrington's visit with her party, Mr. Napoleon Johnson again encountered the gardener. Mr. Johnson was strolling through the garden, conscious of Andy's watchful eye, albeit the gardener was apparently absorbed in "hilling up" the celery. With an irresistible desire to "get even" with his sharp-tongued enemy he resolved to impart a secret which would not only command attention but insure respect.

"We are leaving day after to-morrow, Mr. What-you-may-call."

Andy continued to spade the mould over his celery, and gave no sign.

"We'll likely come again soon! I knows somethin', for sure, will bring us back!"

"If ye ken yer family secrets, ye may keep 'em," said Andy. Then suddenly looking up from his work, he exclaimed, "Eh, sirs! Ye suldna stand in the light o' the bleezing sunshine! If yer insides be comformable to yer outsides, it's a sair pity."

"I can tell you something, Mr. What's-his-name," said the other, in a rage, "that'll change

your tune and mend your manners, and pretty quick, too. Your young lady, Miss Shirley —”

But he got no further. Raising his spade in a threatening manner, Andy rushed towards him, and thundered out: “Tak yer black carcass oot o’ my sight. Awa’ wi’ ye! I’ll —” but Mr. Napoleon Johnson was already far on his way to a vantage-ground of safety. The gardener stooped to pick up a stone, but thinking better of it, he stacked his spade and walked to his little house. There he repaired to a chest in a corner, unlocked it, and withdrew from a small box carefully tied with twine the letter he had found. “I’se no guiding just what to do neist,” he pondered, “the black skellum! I dinna ken! I sudna hae been sae rash, but maircifil Providence alane kept me from whanging him aside his heid wi’ my spade. I’ll e’en do it, gin he comes spearing aboot my young lady. What maun be maun be!” He appreciated the necessity of giving up what clearly belonged to another, but had no clear idea to whom he should confide the letter which would settle Blake. “Not to the bonny leddy her ain-sell! I’ll no smirch her fair saul wi’ the like o’ it! The master is whiles unco’ hasty — and it will be mair mensefu’ if nae bluid be spilt. The auld leddy, Miss Prissy? Na, na! She wadna

bide to read it." These thoughts chased each other through his perplexed mind as he walked slowly towards the house.

He had not gone far from his cottage when he met his prime favourite, Douglas Newton.

"Ah, Andy! I am glad to see you. We leave in a day or two now and I haven't found time to see much of you and the flowers."

"Ye'll come again sune, I'm thinkin'?"

"No, Andy, not soon — perhaps not ever."

"Whisht!" whispered the gardener, thrilled by a sudden resolution. "Come awa', man, into my bit cot yonder! There's pryin' eyes an' listenin' ears hereabout! I maun speak to you your lane."

"Why, what is it, Andy," said Douglas, who really feared the gardener had lost his senses. But Andy gripped him by the arm and hurried him on.

After peering all around the cottage he entered, and carefully shutting the door, he opened the letter with fingers trembling with excitement, and placed it under Newton's eyes.

"Why — this is not meant for me! Where did you get it — nobody could have sent this to me!"

Andy turned over the little sheet and exhibited the address.

Young Newton was astounded. Nothing could have been more compromising than the few words he read. The signature was that of a person notorious in the papers even in that reticent age — a person whom no decent man could possibly know.

“Oh, Andy,” he said at last in distress, “you should not have done this!” And to the gardener’s great surprise and discomfiture he thrust the paper back into his hand, saying sternly: “You should not have kept it one hour. It belongs to Mr. Blake, and you must restore it to him.”

The gardener commenced a surly protest, but Newton had broken away and was striding down the garden walk leading to the stream at the bottom. Resting his hand on top of the wall, he lightly leaped over, and walked along a little path among the reeds and rushes to a willow overhanging the water. Beneath the tree was a stone, a favourite spot to which he had often resorted in a troubled hour during the past week. As soon as he was seated the little fishes in a pool at his feet appeared to catch the food they had learned to expect from him. Sorely dazed as he was he could not resist the mute appeal. Putting his hand in his accustomed pocket to find some

crumbs that might have been left and finding none, he tried another, and his fingers closed over folded papers which proved to be the quinine powders the Colonel had given him. He was about to throw them in the water when he remembered. "God forbid I should make the cup bitter for you," he said, "or for any creature that crawls," and the powders were restored to their hiding-place.

He felt himself to be in a most terrible position. Blake, — well, it was not for him to constitute himself judge, and convict or punish any man ! He had thought so well of Blake ! He had introduced him to his dearest, most valued friends ! The letter certainly belonged to him, and should be restored to him. Was it his duty to expose Blake to Dr. Berkeley ? Trouble and embarrassment might ensue. He felt humiliated that he should have introduced Blake. Yet — what reason had he for suspecting him ? At all events he would have to endure him until the end of his visit, which he prayed might be near.

As to Shirley — her manner towards himself had been that of ordinary courtesy. She had given him no chances. He had not found her one moment alone. No matter ! She was fresh from school. No man was ahead of him. She was

now a woman, exquisite, living, breathing—and to be won! In imagination he saw her in a fine old colonial mansion, with every luxury that wealth could give, or the devotion of one man suggest—and that mansion was Beechwood and that man was Douglas Newton. A sudden elation filled his young heart—born, however, of no clearly defined plan—and his step was elastic and buoyant as he retraced the iris-bordered path, leaped over the low wall, and ascended the terrace-steps leading to the broad gravelled walk in the garden. Down this walk the Colonel, Shirley, and Dorothea were slowly pacing, Shirley and the Colonel evidently absorbed in some interesting topic and little Dorothea, with upturned face, an earnest listener.

“Good morning,” called Douglas. “Are you planning what you are going to do with us to-day?”

“Precisely!” said Shirley, “we are conspirators. We have come forth to look for you that you may conspire with us.”

“Come into the summer-house,” said the Colonel. He seated himself and took Dorothea on his knee. “Now this is the state of the case: Nobody is coming to dine, and nobody has asked us to go to them. We’ve been everywhere—

done everything. Consequently there's nothing more to do. Shirley is positively clear on one point, — that she cannot face another long, hot day listening to Mr. Blake's reading of sentimental poetry and his own personal applications thereon, and —”

“Now, Cousin James, how can you say that? Am I not always delighted to hear him?”

“Well, Shirley,” said the Colonel, shrugging his shoulders, “that's what you told me last night! That was your candle-light impression. — We can then dismiss the new arrangement and repeat the experiences of yesterday.”

“Oh, dear me!” said Shirley. “I thought it was all settled.”

“Yes, Douglas,” chimed in little Dorothea, “we are all going to Catesby to spend the day. Shirley *did* say —”

“Never mind, darling! — You see, Douglas, Cousin James thinks as every one of us here is a son or daughter of an old friend of his father and mother, and must have visited Catesby in childhood, it will be interesting to go there again. Some of us might remember — I know Mama and Aunt Prissy could — and Cousin Ellen. It is only six miles away. But we'll have to hurry. It is ten o'clock now.”

"How about Mr. Blake?"

"Oh — I suppose he'll have to go along! He *might* prefer to stay at home, and Milly could take care of him until Papa comes from his sick people."

"I never heard anything as delightful," exclaimed Douglas. "I'll go with you to the stables, Colonel, and see about the traps."

"And I'll find Aunt Prissy. We were going to have chicken salad to-day, and the chickens were roasted yesterday. We can fill baskets with ham and pickles, cold duck and chickens, and beaten biscuit! Come, Dolly," and taking the little girl's hand, she ran lightly up the terrace steps on her errand.

"The truth is," said the Colonel, "Shirley is tired out. She looks positively haggard. If you want my opinion, I should say she has had a little too much Blake in her share of the pleasant week. I observe she quoted me. The plan for to-day is hers."

"I thought she liked his company," said Douglas, gravely.

"A little too much, then, of a good thing. Anyhow, the idea is hers, not mine. I'm too good a friend of all of you to take you on any such wild expedition. I haven't seen the place

for a month. There was a snake on the front porch last time I was there — and I didn't kill the snake, either."

"There'll be another," said Douglas, "if Blake goes with us."

"Why, man, what do you mean? I thought he was your friend."

"So he was — so he is no longer! Ah, well! I suppose I have my humours, and I have also my prejudices. But, Colonel — I can say no more now, but as I brought him here I feel responsibility, and I am free to say to you confidentially, I like him less than I did."

The Colonel was accustomed to the petty jealousies, the temporary estrangements, the warm reconciliations of young people, — nay, families, — and he attached no serious importance to this. But in the hasty arrangements for the day, he resolved to observe Mr. Blake more closely.

Now as they walked to the stables, he suddenly recalled the fact that Blake had been received without any thought or question as to his antecedents.

"By the bye, Douglas," he said, "where did you first meet Mr. Blake? What do you know about him?"

“That last question is one I am asking myself. We went over in the same ship, and he made himself extremely agreeable to all the passengers. I had the letters you had given me to the American Minister who kindly invited me to spend a few days with him, and Blake called upon me at his home. Of course I introduced him, and Mr. Bancroft invited him to dine one day. Everybody liked him. I remember Mr. Bancroft very cordially assured him of welcome when he returned. I met him again on the Continent. He seemed to take a great fancy to me, and when we parted, I invited him to Newton Hall.”

“Then really you know nothing of the man.”

“I know all I wish to know,” said Douglas. “I shall treat him with civility while he is my guest. *Après?* Well, that depends upon his future movements. He is certainly not to move in our circle longer than I can help.”

CHAPTER VIII

“REMARKS upon my farming will not be in order,” the Colonel called out, as the cavalcade paused for a gate on rusty hinges to be opened from the main road. “I can see at a glance that the hayricks were not covered, and the rain has made mischief; but then, on the other hand, the tobacco is lifting its head; that is our main chance, and old Abram has it in fine condition.”

A short drive through an avenue of cedars, somewhat ragged from age, brought them to the box-bordered front yard of the residence. The tree variety of box had been planted there, each side of a little gate, and cut and trimmed to simulate a tall square pillar with a large ball on top, — copying in green the granite gate pillars of the early colonist, upon which he was wont to chisel his English coat-of-arms. These evergreen imitations had been long strangers to the pruning knife, and, taking the gate in close embrace, had grown together in a solid mass,

— pathetic reminders of the fact that no step of owner, neighbour, or friend had for years passed between them.

“Now, here’s a hospitable entrance to be sure,” laughed Shirley.

“But no prophetic message,” stoutly declared the Colonel. “That impertinent box shall be pruned into shape, Miss Shirley! Some day, you and Mary and Dorothea, and Douglas and Miss Anne and all of you will come and walk *through* — not around.”

But having now walked around, a new obstacle presented itself. A honeysuckle had fallen from the porch and crawled like a huge serpent over the front walk, finally encountered an oak, clambered up, and taken possession comfortably of the lower branches.

“‘With wild thyme and the gadding vine o’ergrown,’” said Douglas. “A ‘gadding vine’ indeed!”

“A family trait!” said the Colonel. “I am a gadding vine myself — left my own place where I was planted, and took possession of a neighbour’s roof-tree.”

“I can remember,” said Douglas, “this honeysuckle on the front porch. I was here — a little fellow — with my mother on a visit, sitting on

the bench below the trellis, and a green snake scared me almost to death, winding around the stem. It was going up to a nest full of young wrens in the eaves. I never forgot it."

"Ah! that was the ancestor perhaps of the big fellow I saw here last month," said the Colonel.

"No," said Douglas. "Snakes that cross my path on their way to young birds have no descendants."

The Colonel had now opened the front doors, flanked by diamond-paned side-lights, and crowned by a "rose-window" from which many of the small panes of glass were missing, and going forward, threw open the doors leading from a broad central hall into rooms on either side, and through another door to a long veranda in the rear. Returning, he said with a low bow, "The lord of the castle humbly bids you welcome."

"Where are his lordship's retainers?" said Mrs. Berkeley. "Methinks there were many in the ancient days."

But Dorothea had run around the house from the front gate, and now appeared with a dignified old black woman, wearing a madras turban, a handkerchief folded over her ample breast,

and a white apron — all bearing crisp folds from recent ironing.

“Ah!” said the Colonel. “How are you, Aunt Chloe? I’ve brought you some company, you see.”

“Howdy, Marse Jeems! How you come on? Your servant, ladies and gentlemen,” with a curtsy, but an anxious look in her face, born of conscious inability on her own part to provide refreshment for so many. “The house is puf-fickly clean, suh,” she added; “I swep’ it all out yistiddy — an’ — an’ there’s a print o’ fresh butter in the spring.”

“Who is with you in the kitchen?” asked the Colonel. “Susan Maria’s little Jane and Peter Jones? Well, make Susan Maria’s little Jane run across the field and tell Abram to send me two of the boys to take the horses, and you send Peter Jones right away to the spring for a pail of fresh water; and boil your kettle —”

“Now, James,” interposed Mrs. Berkeley, “just please take yourself off with your guests and leave Ellen with me and Aunt Chloe. Send in the stores. Where is the sumpter mule with his panniers? Ah, Douglas! Don’t leave the basket of ice out there in the sun! Bring it in here to me! Tom, run down in the garden and

look for the mint bed. Instinct will guide you. Take care, Rosalie! If you go along, you must look out for briars on your muslin flounces. Give me your keys, James. I'll find the brandy! You don't say so? Some of the old Madeira? That's fine! Off with you — all of you — until you're called."

The Colonel ushered his guests into an immense drawing-room divided by a row of pillars. Sofas and chairs covered with black horsehair cloth stood stiffly against the wall, and, with a round centre-table holding an Astral lamp, comprised the entire furnishing of the room. A fine copy in Carrara marble of the Venus di Medici stood on a pedestal in one corner, and one beautiful engraving hung over the mantel — a Raffaello Morghen proof of Guido's "Aurora." The lovely goddess in her gracious attitude, and the glorious Hours surrounding the triumphal car of the Rising Sun seemed strangely out of keeping with the grim untenanted chairs and the long-ago extinguished lamp. Mr. Blake had not the tact to suppress his appreciation of this incongruous assembling, but was instantly, though courteously, quenched by the Colonel.

"No ill omens, my dear sir! The old house is surrounded with many singing birds; the swal-

lows build in her chimneys, but the Raven has not yet nested among them. My Venus stands there ready to welcome youth and beauty in the future, as she welcomes it now — golden hours and a rising sun are already here — and coming again some day.”

He was determined to make this a happy day ; and full as was his own heart of emotion at the gathering of the children of his parents' old friends under his own roof, — some of whom he held dearest of all others in the world, — conscious as he always was of the sleepers in the grove beyond the garden, he allowed no word or look to mar the light gayety of his guests. From room to room he led them : to the library with its Hanoverian book-case and tattered leather chair, to the ballroom above, with its shining floor and many windows, — clearly intimating that dances by daylight might often be in order ; to the bedrooms retaining little except high bedsteads to be ascended by means of steps at the side of each, and tall tables before which the belles of half a century ago had stood, high priests of the mysteries of a beauty's toilet.

“Where do *you* sleep, if you can sleep at all in this haunted house ?” asked Mr. Blake.

“Tom and Douglas can answer that — or, rather, where I *don't* sleep when they honour me with their company,” said the Colonel. He began to think there might be reason in young Newton's change of heart. The man evidently lacked sensibility — fineness. He could recall, now that he was observant, many questions of an intimate nature.

“There's a call for help in the dining-room,” was announced from the foot of the stairs.

“The punch! Here! Here! Mrs. Carrington, I am coming,” exclaimed Douglas.

“Not at all — stay where you are, young man. Careful hands are needed to wash the Colonel's Sèvres plates. He expressly orders them to be used! Not you, Elvira! You have a gift for breaking china. Send Mildred.”

“But how about the punch?”

“Punch, indeed — for dinner! Where are your lemons I'd like to know? You are going to have hot coffee, and we did propose mint julep and brought ice, — if Tom and Rosalie can get their consent to leave the garden and come in out of the hot sun.”

“How ever do you happen to have genuine Sèvres plates?” asked the personal Mr. Blake, once more.

“Simply because I drove two and a half miles out of Paris to select them where they are made. But my mother’s crockery is older and more interesting.”

The dinner was a pronounced success. Tom and Rosalie had justified their long absence in the garden, by bringing in, not only mint, but a basket of fine fresh figs. The old panelled dining-room held a happy company. La Fayette had dined there once, and many a Revolutionary officer, to say nothing of an occasional visit from a President of the United States. “I mean to have General Winfield Scott here at no distant day to meet the present company,” said the Colonel. “You have all given me a new spirit by your presence. I had no idea that the bare old rooms could be so glorified. To our next meeting! Certainly, Dolly darling! If you don’t honour the toast, I withdraw it.”

“Wait a moment!” exclaimed Douglas, whose seat faced a front window. “There is the Doctor coming in.”

“A pretty march you stole on me,” said the Doctor, at whose entrance all had risen. “So you left me with Aunt Prissy, did you? She was making brandy peaches, and literally drove me out of the house. But how bright and clean

this room looks. Not at all musty as one might expect. Were you careful about spiders? Never sweep them down, you know, to crawl about."

"Spiders!" said Mrs. Berkeley, indignantly. "Ah, you wise and learned Doctor! 'Spiders never set their webs on a cedar roof.'"

"Authority!" demanded the Doctor. "Granted! granted! I know your ways of old, Mary. My own literary reminiscence is that

"The subtle spider never spins
But on dark days his slimy gins."

"And the days in this dear old house have been dark for many years," said the Colonel.

"Because," said the Doctor, "we have been so selfish as to borrow their light. The day was pretty dark for me this noon when I alighted at my own door and found my birds all flown."

The Colonel's old India-blue china challenged the warmest approbation of the elders of the party.

"It possesses a strange charm for me," said Mrs. Carrington. "The very shape of those covered cups, and squarish dishes stirs my heart. I don't know what the picture means, so queer and out of perspective. I only know it is perfectly fascinating."

“Cousin James knows,” said Dorothea.

“Then, of course, the Colonel will tell us,” said Anne Page. — “*Only* here and now it is hereafter to be *my* story! I’ve asked for it, and I alone am to have the honour of knowing it and telling it at dinners when I go down to Richmond. They are all crazy there about French china, but I can dilate upon the old blue and look superior and learned.”

“Suppose I decline to tell you!” laughed the Colonel. “Suppose I patent my story! How do you know I may not invent it after all?”

Anne rested her cheek thoughtfully on the tips of her fingers. “Alas!” she sighed, “I am quite powerless! I am so small and insignificant! Sometimes — yes indeed, sometimes — ‘my little body is a-weary of this great world.’ And yet — and yet I might ‘suppose’ too! Suppose *I* know a secret — not about the Colonel — but about somebody the Colonel thinks the world of. Suppose that somebody would faint away if I told it! Suppose I say I *will* tell it, unless I learn all about this willow plate.”

“Blackmail, and punishable by the laws of the Commonwealth!” exclaimed Douglas, with half-concealed anxiety.

“I can’t get my consent to be a bore, even to save bloodshed or defamation of character,” the Colonel declared; but the unanimous vote of the party brought the old story — how a rich Mandarin who lived in the large house had a daughter, Li Chi, who very improperly went to work to capture poor Chang, the gardener’s son. How, under the orange tree, they said things which the Mandarin overheard. How he made a great to-do, and laid down the law; never dreaming that any earthly mortal would dare disobey — for Mandarins are extremely hasty and have small respect for people’s heads; how the small house in a corner of the plate is the gardener’s cottage and there the lovers hid, and obtaining a boat, eloped to the little hut near the top, which represents the humble home Chang had provided for his bride; how the Mandarin pursued them with a whip, and would have beaten them to death had not the gods dwelling in the sacred mountains, quite at the top of the plate, turned them into turtle-doves, — an interesting species of bird that has been found to be indigenous to all countries, all climes, and which changed its song ever after to a mourning plaint. “Miss Li Chi and Mr. Chang,” added the Colonel, “eloped in early

spring, when the willows put forth their leaves. Hence the willow tree in the picture! The season is regularly observed by American turtle-doves."

"Very nice, very satisfactory," observed Anne, thoughtfully, "but I'll make a deal more of it when I tell it. My secret is safe — until further provocation."

"Miss Anne is rash," said Douglas. "Other people might be armed with a 'suppose,' — not altogether supposititious."

It was always understood that upon every excursion the Colonel and Primrose would take care of Shirley and Dorothea in their own little cart. "Did you like the old house, Shirley?" he asked, bending his head to find her face under the brim of her deep bonnet, as they drove home in the delicious evening air.

"*Loved* it," the girl replied fervently. "It is the dearest old house! And that wonderful portrait of Admiral Ap Catesby Jones! And your own portrait — exactly like you — over the high mantel in the dining room. The eyes followed me everywhere — did you notice, Dolly? Bring us again soon, please."

"Soon and often. I shall set about rehabilitating the place at once. While you are away,

I shall make a beginning. It shall be everything it used to be."

"I wish I could stay and help you," said Shirley. "We could be so happy over it. Dear! Dear! It's a pity poor Papa must have those waters."

Alas! She little knew how deeply her words sank into her hearer's heart!

CHAPTER IX

THE young company elected to make this last evening of their happy week a musical festival. Shirley was accomplished in music, having had a rare genius for her teacher; Rosalie and Mildred sang duets from "Norma," and a wonderful example of colorature, "I've wandered in dreams"; Elvira played a Spanish fandango on the guitar; Anne, a dignified Portia, recited "You see me, Lord Bassanio"; Tom Blackwell, on being called upon, declared, in an injured tone, that he must be excused, that although he had a good voice and knew a good song, he had been so cruelly criticised by his first audience at Berkeley Castle — Miss Rosalie and Miss Dorothea — that his feelings had not yet recovered from the shock they had sustained.

As Mr. Blake was the star of the company, he was allowed the concluding song — and quite electrified his audience by an ambitious aria from a recent opera.

Meanwhile Miss Prissy, Mrs. Carrington, the Doctor, and the Colonel made a *partie carrée*

for whist in the library; and Mrs. Berkeley was only too happy to rest in the veranda with tired little Dorothea in her arms, out of the way, and responsible for nobody's amusement. The day, with its memories, had been full for her, and she felt subdued in spirit and glad to be alone.

After the ambitious music had been duly rendered and admired, Mr. Blake sang again and again and finally, "recalling the wonderful day," offered Hood's tender song, "I remember, I remember the cot where I was born," — new, then, and destined never to grow old, — rendering, with touching pathos, the concluding lines :—

"I remember, I remember the fir trees dark and high;
I used to think their shady tops grew close against the
sky;

It was a childish ignorance — but, ah! 'Tis little joy
To find I'm farther off from Heaven than when I was a
boy."

He had a sympathetic audience, ready for tears or smiles on demand. Douglas fancied he saw Shirley's eyes dimming, lost all patience, and exclaimed :—

"Isn't there another verse, Blake? That is too pathetic an ending."

"Unfortunately, no other would be appropriate."

"It might end this way — pardon me," and taking the guitar from the hand of the singer, he imitated to perfection his rapt uplifted look, and in a fine barytone, rolled out: —

"I remember, I remember the peach⁷ tree by the wall;
I used to watch its shady tops in hopes a peach would fall;
It was a childish ignorance — but, ah! 'Tis little joy
To find that I get no more fruit than when I was a boy."

The laughter that followed irritated Blake; and an ugly gleam shot from his eye. Douglas saw it and was stimulated to press his advantage. An encore being demanded, he offered, as he explained, "the wholesome warning conveyed in the story of a Scottish lassie, Maggie, as related by one who had evidently suffered." He sang, alternating with recitative, the verses telling of one Duncan Grey, who had visited a country house with the express purpose of wooing the fair daughter thereof. "Even as you and I," thought more than one of his hearers, as many another has thought since. "It appears," said Douglas, "that the Maggie of the poet knew her power. Her heart was hardened to her lover. She enjoyed his pain. She 'cast her head full high,' and scorned poor Duncan when he begged and prayed, even when he

threatened suicide—'spak' o' loupin o'er a linn.'
Finally, seeing that

"Time and chance are but a tide
And slighted love is sair to bide,

Duncan resolved to pull himself together and go
about his business. A worm will turn !

" 'Shall I like a fool,' quoth he,
'For a haughty hizzie dee ?
She may go to — France for me.'

The wisdom of this course was immediately
justified : —

"How it came, let doctors tell.
Meg grew sick — as he grew heal.
Something in her bosom wrings :
For relief a sigh she brings ;
And ah, her e'en they spake sic things !

"Observe," continued Douglas, "the innate
nobility and magnanimity of my sex. A woman
now — the more he suffered, the more he might,
but our lover had a noble soul : —

"Duncan was a lad of grace ;
Maggie's was a piteous case ;
Duncan could not be her death !
Swelling pity smooored his wrath.
Now — they're crouse and happy both !"

And crouse (cheerful) and happy was the party
when, at a late hour, it broke up. "He jests

at scars who never felt a wound," whispered Blake, in bidding Shirley good night.

Soon the lights were out, and the moon and stars looked down upon a hushed household, — hushed, but not asleep—at least not all of its inmates.

The place assigned to Douglas that night was upon a sofa in the parlour. He did not occupy it. He walked far out on the avenue, returned, and walked again. His visit would end the next day. Reacting from the elation of the morning, he was now persuaded from Shirley's manner that she did not care for him. He had come a week before, resolved to tell her of his love for her; how he had loved her ever since his boyhood, how he had cherished her image all through his university life, and studied and taken honours for her sake. How her dear face had been the companion of all his travels — in the snows of Switzerland or under Italian skies; how he had come home to win her. Now she would never know it! He was not the man to importune any woman!

All at once he thrilled with a sudden resolution. Stealing into the drawing-room, he found his guitar. He knew that Shirley and Dorothea slept in the "wing" built against the Doctor's

bedroom. He crept noiselessly close to the one window that looked into the garden. The Doctor might hear,—others might hear,—and Shirley, in her deep young sleep, might hear nothing! No matter. He was only a serenader; that was too common an incident to awaken interest or surprise. Tuning his instrument softly, he drew near to the casement, and with all the passion of his heavily burdened heart, sang that most tender song, of the most ardent of lovers:—

“ My love is like a red, red rose
That's newly sprung in June;
My love is like the melody
That's sweetly played in tune;
And thou art fair, my dearest dear!
And none can love as I!
And I will love thee still, my dear,
Till a' the seas gang dry.

“ Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt with the sun!
I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run!”

Something soft fell on the strings of his guitar. Looking up, he beheld Dorothea's night-capped head between the half-closed shutters, and her little brown out-thrust arm. “Here's a rose

for you, Douglas," she whispered, disappearing with a suddenness that suggested prompt action on the part of some one within. He picked up the flower, put it in his bosom, and as he slowly departed, the tender impassioned words floated back :—

“Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear,
And the rocks melt with the sun!
I will love thee still, my dear,
While the sands o' life shall run!”

He had told her — he had said it ! It was a vow, whether she heard it or no.

He sat long on the door-step, in a state of exaltation. Presently he felt something cold touch his hand. Flora had left her little family at the stable, and come around the house to see who this early morning singer might be. He laid a caressing hand on the dog's head, and kept her beside him. Not until the crimson glory streamed up from the east did he enter the house and throw himself on the couch prepared for him.

Meanwhile the Colonel, in the small room behind the office, thought long and seriously of his morning talk with Douglas ; with the result that the next mail to England bore this letter to the American Minister :—

MY DEAR MR. BANCROFT,

I have not thanked you for your kindness to Douglas Newton, in response to my letters introducing him. I hoped for nothing more than the honour of having my young friend meet you. It has been a great happiness to learn from him of your cordial welcome and his delightful visit to you. I recall vividly similar kindness to myself when I, a raw college graduate, met you at Heidelberg, crowned with your Göttingen honours and already a fixed star in the literary firmament.

We are still, in this country, jubilant over our Mexican triumphs, and we have, as you know, placed the military hero in the chair vacated by the statesman. Many of us — stubborn Old Line Whigs although we be — would have liked to see the chair filled by the majestic figure of Winfield Scott, than whom the Almighty never made a braver or nobler man. How far we may err in making our highest office a spoil of war instead of a place of hard service requiring a special training and fitness remains to be seen. At the present moment in this country the sword is mightier than the pen. It has just decapitated your friend Nathaniel Hawthorne and taken from him a government office at Salem. Unable to dig and ashamed to beg, Hawthorne is now engaged in another business, — novel-writing, — which is, I am told, quite as lucrative an industry as any.

But I must not, in the delight of writing to you, forget

that you are a busy man. I am at present in a house full of young men and women, — the veriest children, all of them, — and small use have they for an old fellow! Your friend, Newton, is one of them; soon, I think, to marry an interesting member of the Page family. At the present midnight moment I hear in the distance the twang of a guitar, and make no doubt he is pouring out his soul under her window.

By the bye, he has brought with him a Mr. Blake, who was thrown with him on board ship and afterwards presented by him to you. I am surprised to find that he knew too little of Blake before he did so, and now it seems something has arisen between the young men which constrains Newton to withdraw all acquaintance with Blake after this visit is over. I mention it lest the latter should make demands, warranted apparently by us, upon your courtesy, that you may know simply that *we no longer know him!* But I must not trespass upon your indulgence. I am, with great respect and gratitude,

Faithfully your friend,

JAMES MADDOCK JONES.

CHAPTER X

THE next morning Douglas knocked at Dr. Berkeley's door. "Here I am, Doctor! Pizarro says you sent for me. What an ideal office you have here!"

"Walk in! You see Dorothea and James have driven me from my office in the yard, and Mary had to take me in with my bottles. The trouble here is I can't keep Dorothea out of my sanctum. She insists on mixing Carminative for the babies, and makes bread-pills on the marble table. She has applied for the position of medical assistant. She always has a patient, — somebody who must take nourishment every two hours, or a cut finger to dress for some little darkey."

"Dorothea is a dear," said Douglas. "I envy her privileges. I am sure she is never unwelcome. She is an angel in the house."

"But you see," laughed the Doctor, "the angel learns too much about the house. I can't for the life of me keep a secret from her. About a year ago — I don't think she knows much

better now — the Bishop called when we were out on a drive, and she was afraid he would leave before our return. She begged him to stay, and offered him an inducement: 'If you'll wait, I'll show you Mrs. Black's tumour!'"

"The darling child! I'm devoted to her."

"I advise you to restrain your feelings in the Colonel's presence. He has prior claims, and might give you trouble."

The Doctor had been walking about as he talked, taking down and replacing, one after another, books from the shelves.

"But I must not keep you," he said, pausing. "I sent for you because I want to give you some powders and caution you a bit. You already have traces of malaria in your system, and we must clear it out before the chill-and-fever season."

"I am perfectly well, Doctor!"

"You think so, but you are not. Now I want you to take these powders three times a day for two or three weeks. Keep out of the night air while you are taking them. Miss Anne must do without serenades for a short time," he added, smiling.

"She will not miss them," said Douglas.

"She has never had them."

"Well," said the Doctor, "symptoms are against you; almost as clearly exhibited as your malaria!"

"I never serenaded Miss Page," said Douglas, gravely; "she knows I never did."

He walked to the mantel, picked up a bit of mineral ore and examined it with critical interest. Turning with a sudden impulse, he said with emotion: "There is but one woman in all the world for me! My song last night was for her! Whether she accepts it or not, my life is sacredly vowed to — Shirley."

Accustomed as he had become to the Doctor's sure sympathy in all that concerned himself, he unconsciously looked for it now. To his surprise, the Doctor seemed strangely agitated. He walked to the window and stood long before he could command himself.

"Have you spoken to Shirley?" he asked at last, in a low, strained voice.

"Never! Only last night under her window!"

"My boy," said the Doctor, "I suppose I might have expected this. But I didn't. In all kindness, but in all truth, I must tell you I can never consent to give my girl to you — never, never! There is an insuperable obstacle to your union which can never be evaded or

overcome. No, no, listen to me! I know of nothing to your personal disadvantage. I consider myself comparatively a poor man. I believe you to be, on the contrary, able to live in great ease and opulence. Your estate is the finest in the county — but," he paused and added sternly and with emphasis, "the mistress of that home my daughter can never be. I forbid you to ask it of her! The reason I can never tell you."

The young man looked at his old friend darkly, and with resentful surprise. His face was set and hard. "And what if I refuse — as I do refuse — to obey you without reason! Am I to stand and submit quietly to a stab in the dark?"

The Doctor's anguish was distressing. "Douglas, my boy —" he almost sobbed, "I know it is hard! I beseech you then! I entreat you — have patience! Promise me only this much, that you will not reveal yourself to Shirley by look, word, or deed for one year, only one year! At the end of that time — no, I cannot even then consent — but at least I will tell you the reason. Is this too much to ask? My girl — God help her — is but seventeen."

"It is much," said Douglas, "but — I promise!

I can wait." And turning to the door, he affected to ignore the Doctor's proffered hand and appeared no more until the party was taking leave.

On the veranda, all was bustle and compliment and promise of return. There were hearts among the laughing little company that ached at parting. Douglas passed through a rear door to the garden to steady his nerves. There he found Andy and questioned him about the return of the letter to its owner. He then paused for a last look at the lovely garden before re-entering the house. Dorothea, according to her custom, had also visited Andy for her morning flowers, arriving just as Douglas was about to leave. Taking her little basket from her arm, he asked her permission to escort her to the house. She looked so sad that he said gently, "I really believe, Dolly, you are sorry to lose me." The child's lip quivered. "I am," she said, "and Shirley is dref'fly sorry about something. She cried last night. Her pillow was all wet this morning."

"Where is she now, Dolly?"

"She came down the garden with me, and when she saw you, she went and hid behind the big crêpe myrtle. I reckon her eyes are red."

"Run in, Dolly darling, I'll follow. Here!

Here is the peach-stone basket I promised to cut for you. Run in the house and show it to your mother."

But his second thought checked the ardent impulse. His promise! And why should he suppose she cared? "She has treated me with polite indifference all the time," he thought. "Why should I imagine her tears were for me? How do I know she ever heard me? It seems she hid from me, and I shall certainly not intrude upon her."

Taking Dorothea's basket again, he accompanied her to the house.

Shirley sped to her room, bathed her eyes, put a rose in her hair, and was the gayest of the gay all morning. When the hour of departure came, there were many regrets, jests, promises of return, and protestations that never had there been such a delightful house-party.

Everybody was talking, laughing, and jesting when the gardener appeared. "Ah," said Mr. Blake, "it wanted but this! Here comes our friend Andy, doubtless with a flower for each of us."

The gardener looked at him sourly and tendered the letter. "I'm thinkin', sir, you lost this," he said.

Blake took the rose-coloured missive, crushed it in his hand, and said hotly, "And I'm thinking, fellow, that you've taken your own time in returning it." Recovering himself, however, as he saw curious glances around the company, he said lightly, "It's of no consequence, however."

"That was mine ain opeenion when I read it," said Angus, "but Mr. Douglas here has mair wisdom in sic things, and he said you'd be sair to lose it."

"By George!" exclaimed Blake, "two readers to sit in judgment upon my affairs! Where was the address?"

"I beg pardon, Blake," said Douglas, calmly. "Angus naturally gave the letter to the first one of us he met, who happened to be myself. I did not observe the address on the back until I saw the signature. I told him to restore it to you, but he has had no opportunity, I presume."

"All right," said Blake, swallowing his chagrin and anger, and tendering a piece of silver to the gardener.

"Na, na," said Angus, with a bow of mock humility. "Pit oop your siller! Keep it to win its way some ither gate! Angus McGilli-

cuddy will nane of it," and he strode off to his barrow outside the enclosure. The situation was rather embarrassing, but Tom Blackwell immediately relieved it by seizing upon Dorothea as she appeared on the scene with the Colonel.

"I think, Dolly," said he, "that as you were so hard on me at breakfast the other morning you might give me a good-bye kiss."

The child smiled, but shook her head.

"Very proper, Your Grace," said the Colonel. "Duchesses never kiss their subjects. Only their Cousin Jameses!"

"That is what I told Mr. Blake," said Dorothea.

"You see, Blake," said Tom, "you have your limitations — you can sing a good song, but you can't come to people's houses and claim privileges denied old friends and correspondents."

Mr. Blake's visit to Newton Hall had not been followed by invitations to other country houses, and he took final leave, announcing his departure for the next day. He expected, he said, to go abroad.

"Shall we not see you again, Douglas, before we leave for the Springs?" said Mrs. Berkeley.

"I fear not. Mrs. Page has kindly invited me for next week, and I believe Miss Anne will

permit me to accept," he answered, smiling at the mocking expression on the face of the little lady.

"Oh, I'll share my bread and salt with him! That involves nothing, I believe, except that I must hide my dagger under my caftan while he is in my tent. Afterwards? Well, that depends."

All this sounded intimate and significant, and was interpreted by Shirley as evidence of a perfect understanding between the two.

"By the bye," asked Mrs. Berkeley, "what do you hear from Harry?"

"Oh, Harry is 'conditioned,' you know. He was a little too miserable to live last winter — low down — despairing. He consoled himself with a large dose of Calithump — 'Calithump'? I thought everybody knew the meaning of that noble word. It means general insubordination, infernal noises at night — bands of musicians with horns, bells, chains, drums, tin-pans. Harry and I agreed that he must study at the University all summer if he expected Mr. Minor to give him his degree next year."

"I wonder if that will cure him," remarked Anne, thoughtfully.

"Probably not," said Douglas. "I'll bring

him home next Christmas and discipline him here. He has a complication of infirmities. His case is similar to the immortal Duncan's in some respects."

So, jesting and laughing, they took their places in the old-fashioned coach belonging to the Newtons that had brought them, protesting that never in the past had there been, never in the future could there be, so utterly delightful a visit anywhere to anybody. Mr. Blake was accommodated with a buggy to himself.

The coach held four inside, and two on the box. Douglas claimed the driver's seat behind his own four bays, now dancing with impatience to be off. As he clambered up to his place the Colonel called to him.

"Be careful of your leaders, Newton. I see you have Castor and Pollux. Miss Anne says she wishes you'd let Uncle Edinboro' drive. She's afraid to trust you."

"She doesn't mean it! She has told me another story! As a matter of fact, I have promised her this seat beside me, and a lesson in driving four-in-hand. Uncle Edinboro' has my horse, and will open the gates," which assertion was immediately verified by the young lady who climbed with alacrity into the vacant seat,

Tom Blackwell, to his great content, making a fourth inside. Poor Shirley felt that no more was needed! "Understanding" indeed! Everything was settled between them! As she turned to reënter the house she pleaded weariness, headache, and begged for quiet possession of her own room. Dorothea, on her way to rehabilitate her room in the office, saw a white arm thrust out of the window, and the shutters closely drawn in.

Mr. Blake, despite his monumental self-esteem, was aware of a sudden chill in the atmosphere and accepted Mrs. Carrington's invitation for the night, sending his valet on to Beechwood for his luggage. He was invited to no other house, and left next day. He had not been altogether trusted by the young men of the party at Berkeley Castle. They challenged their own feelings, suspicious lest sectional prejudice — unworthy in entertaining a guest — might have warped their judgment. Indeed, judgment is rarely the controlling power in our society likes and dislikes. The argument against liking Doctor Fell is the only one we acknowledge or can invent.

Blake was indifferent as far as he was concerned. He considered the loss theirs, not his

own. He was going to New York to prepare, not for sailing, but for spending the season at the White Sulphur Springs — a recently formed plan which he kept to himself. He was delighted to discover that he was really almost in love! There was something stimulating, fascinating, in the bare idea. He could not remember ever having been truly, really, in love. As to any result — why, that might be determined later. For perfect enjoyment of a watering-place season, nothing could be better than to be almost in love with a beautiful distingué Virginia woman — so fresh, so unlike anything he had hitherto known. Apparently he had no rivals. That was unfortunate. Rivals would give additional zest to the situation. They would certainly appear at the Springs, and he would give them a lesson! Those proud South Carolinians, — the confident, self-esteeming Virginians! At all events, rival or no rival, he was almost in love! His heart was not as burnt-out a cinder as he had supposed.

CHAPTER XI

DOUGLAS conducted Mrs. Carrington and her guests to her own door, and, declining her entreaty to remain to dinner, turned the coach over to Edinboro', mounted his own spirited Saladin, and galloped back to Beechwood. He longed for a quiet place to think over the terrible thing that had come to him.

"Don't disturb me to-night, Uncle Caleb, for anybody," he said, as he dismounted, to the old servant who was a sort of butler emeritus, — having become too old for his earlier position of coachman. "If any of the boys drop in, give them the best you have, and tell them I've gone to bed with a headache."

"All right, Marse Douglas! Dilsey expected you an' biled one of the four-year-old hams to-day."

"Send me a slice with a biscuit and a cup of coffee to the library. No, no! No wine to-night! Here, Sandy, open the shutters and help me off with my boots. Mind well, Caleb, *nobody* — not if the Angel Gabriel calls."

“The angel Gabr’el wouldn’ sen’ no message by Caleb, Marse Douglas,” said the old man, solemnly. “Ef’n de time done come fo’ him to call, he can take keer uv his own business. Jes’ let ’im blow he horn once, an’ you’ll be boun’ to foller. ’Twon’ be for many long years to come, I hope, suh.”

“I don’t hope for long years,” said Douglas; “the sooner they end the better for me.”

“Sh-sh, fo’ de Lawd’s sake, Marse Douglas! Don’ talk dat-er-way! Cæsar lay on his back at de kitchen do’ all las’ night howlin’ — an’ now here you come, suh, talkin’ wild and ongawdly.”

In the darkness, on the leather-covered chair in his study, Douglas smoked pipeful after pipeful of strong Virginia tobacco, and agonized over the strange news of the morning. It was not from *personal* reasons, the Doctor had said. There was nothing against him personally. His father, then — perhaps his grandfather! Was there a black drop in the proud Newton blood — an ineffaceable taint? Had there been a hidden crime, a thrust in the dark, unrepented, unavenged? He strained his memory in vain endeavour to recall some mysterious hint dropped in his childhood ears which might afford some starting-point for investigation.

The room was small, and in his father's time had been known as the "study." Later, a few sparsely filled book-shelves had been added, and it was rechristened "the library." Evidently his father had not been much addicted to literature. Some of those old books — who could tell? — might give him the clue he coveted. From the shelves, his glance rested on the two portraits above them. His dear mother in a thin, scant robe with a thick curl resting on her sweet, bare bosom; — his father — a handsome face above his soft neck-cloth and ruffled shirt-front. Sully had painted them, and had caught or created an expression in his father's eyes of reproachful brooding. So, at least, Douglas now imagined. His father had died when he was a small child, his mother ten years later. A sad woman — yes — a woman of frequent tears, but was she not a widow? That was explanation enough. Then an aunt, her maiden sister, had come to mother the two boys. She, too, was dead. He had been sent out of the county to school — he and Harry, and knew none of the neighbours intimately except the Berkeleys. Perhaps eighty-year-old Aunt Winny might know something, but the negro was too emotional, too superstitious, to be consulted on vital matters.

There was Mrs. Ponsonby, but she was a *grande dame*, and Douglas shrank from approaching her. Why, this was monstrous — this idea of going among one's neighbours on such quest! "Do you know what is against me — what taint in my blood, what blot on my escutcheon?"

At the intolerable suggestion, he sprang from his chair and went out in the garden. There was the interlacing of white gravelled walks, dark clumps of shrubbery, long stretch of hedge and the outside trees. There, too, on the little hill beyond was the gleam of marble among the cedars. No — he could not bear to visit the spot to-night! There lay his sweet mother, his honoured father; the father who had so honoured him, leaving him, his eldest son, the homestead, and to Harry the smaller farm at Cross Roads. The witnesses to the will — might they not be able to enlighten him? There were three — not one of the three living. The old county clerk was dead. The will had been drawn by Joseph Watkins. — Ah! Judge Watkins was living!

Douglas rapidly retraced his steps. It was now late, and the servants had left the house for their own quarters outside. He saw old Caleb, peacefully smoking a pipe with his wife outside their door and called to him. "How soon must

I leave here, Uncle Caleb, to reach Judge Watkins's house to breakfast?"

The old man considered — "Fifteen mile an' a ferry to cross. Saladin would take you easy in two hours, but the ferryman won't be up! Br'er Sam is gitten sorter ole an' —"

"Ah! Never mind Br'er Sam and the ferry! There's such a thing as swimming — and the boys' canoe might be tied to the bank. Have Saladin at the gate an hour before day. I'll not need Sandy."

"Sandy is gwine along!" said Caleb, stubbornly, with the freedom of an old family servant. "Who gwine blanket Saladin and walk 'im about to cool off arter you done gallop 'im fifteen mile? You kin brek yo' own neck ef you want to, — but I sholy is gwine take keer o' Saladin."

"Oh, well," said Douglas, wearily, as he turned away, "have your own way. Probably you're right. I am not fit even to take care of Saladin. Only don't let Sandy be a minute late."

"Tain't no use fer you to try to manage Marse Douglas, Caleb," old Dilsey advised between the puffs of her pipe.

"Manage! He's too masterful fer me! I wish fo' Gawd he'd git a wife to manage him."

“Marse Douglas ain't no ways onreasonable ef you take 'im right.”

“Dar 'tis! You got to be as keerful as ef he was a year-old colt. He'll play 'roun' as sweet as a kitten, but jus' you try to bridle 'im, an' you'll see 'im rar and tar an' paw up de groun'! When I see 'im carry on dat-er-way, I dasn't projeck wid 'im. I jus' stan' off an' giv 'im he haid an' let 'im run hese'f down.”

Caleb smoked with a spirit too perturbed for enjoyment of his prized evening luxury.

“What he gwine fo' day to see de Judge about?” The old fellow shook his grey head with a troubled look. “Sump'n nurrer's up, Dilsey,” the old man confided. “Mark my words. Dere's a weddin' brewin'.”

“How 'bout Cæsar howlin' las' night? Dog don' howl cep'n for death an' fune'al.”

“Well, ain' a weddin' next do' to a fune'al? Fust, rejicin' — den moanin'. Fust, pipin' an' dancin', — den lamentin'. A time fo' wuk an' a time fo' res' an' nothin' new under de sun an' all is vexation an' vanity o' sperit. Selah!”

In the face of such superior sanctity and learning, the old wife found nothing to say. Having smoked their pipes silently and shaken out the ashes of departed joys, they betook themselves to rest.

CHAPTER XII

JUDGE WATKINS, an alert, keen-eyed gentleman with traces of snuff on his otherwise spotless shirt-front, walked out to the gate to meet his young guest with many expressions of hearty welcome. The Judge was an attractive figure. Like John Randolph of Roanoke, he wore his grey hair combed back from his forehead and tied *en queue*, with a narrow black ribbon. Men in that day were classed as "old men" at fifty — and few lived beyond that age.

"Mrs. Watkins will be delighted to see you," he said cordially. "We happen to be alone. Our young people are off on a round of visits. Down, Hero! Down, sir! The pointer remembers you, you see! Ah, Saladin!" patting the horse's shoulder. "Don't feed him for an hour, Sandy! Come in, come in! You knew the way to the bowl and towels on the back porch when you and my Joe were boys. Joe has gotten ahead of you — married and a fine boy. Hurry up, and while you get rid of the dust, I'll make you a mint julep. Breakfast is just coming in."

Douglas had perceived, before entering the house, the delicious odours from the kitchen — boiling coffee, browning biscuits, and an appetizing hint of some salt relish. His young appetite responded with a bound of anticipation.

If anybody in all the world deserved the one perfect word “dear,” that body was Mrs. Watkins. Fifty years of sweet, pure living, of tender affections, of reverent piety, had written her story on her face, and added a charm unknown to her girlhood beauty. Beneath the thin ruffle of her Martha Washington cap, and soft bands of silver hair, eyes looked love and benevolence upon all around her. She was full of kind inquiry. Why had not Douglas come before? Where was Harry? Did Harry look like his mother?

“Now, before Daphne snares you with her waffles, Douglas,” said the Judge, “take a hard biscuit and a bit of this North Carolina roe herring. Nothing like it for an appetizer. Ah! here comes the Madame’s coffee!”

The old Virginia coffee was renowned. Nobody has such coffee in these degenerate days. The Mocha or old government Java was roasted by being stirred with a hickory stick in an open oven, over clear coals, until every berry was

cooked crisp and brown and brittle to the core. It was then, in order to retain the aroma and insure clearness, glazed while hot with the white of an egg; and ground on the moment it was needed! The coffee-pot, always religiously scrubbed, was left open all day to be sweetened by the hot sunshine. The coffee was suffered to boil up once, and served immediately with sweet cream and "sugar to taste." Five minutes' soaking on its grounds was deemed enough to ruin the finest Mocha. And to ruin it was a sin, and not a venial sin either!

After breakfast the Judge offered a pipe to his guest on the veranda, but Douglas declined to smoke, and said, with restrained emotion, "I come on private business, Judge! May we not have our talk in the office?"

"You know I don't practise, my boy!" said the Judge, as he led the way to a small building in the yard. "I am about to hold my summer term at the courthouse. Here is my study. Take a seat! No one will interrupt us."

Douglas proceeded as best he could to inform the Judge, telling his story without betraying himself in the matter closest to his heart. He implored him to be frank, to ignore any pain that

might result from a full disclosure of the truth. What was the stigma attaching to his home and following him and his brother?

"I see you know what I mean — you understand! I can bear anything! Tell me all. What is the curse that follows me? Was there murder, forgery, — dishonour?"

The poor Judge was distressed. "I shall surely be honest with you, my boy. There was no murder, no forgery, no man's fireside violated. Dishonour? I leave you to judge. Certainly there was no legal dishonour. When I was a young lawyer here, your father lived at the Cross Roads. You and your brother were not yet born. Your father was reckoned a well-to-do man, careful, shrewd; had inherited money rather than land, and lent this money on terms deemed liberal for the times — I mean liberal to *himself*! His friend and college mate, Robert Benson, had inherited the fine estate of Beechwood; had little money, was a careless farmer, wild, extravagant, kept fine horses and costly wines, was foolishly kind-hearted. He lived freely, was security for anybody that asked it, ready to go on any man's bond; lost at horse-racing; lost at cards; — and finally he was in a tight place, and borrowed from your father.

Mr. Newton hesitated when the loan was requested, and Benson voluntarily gave him a mortgage on Beechwood. Your father almost immediately foreclosed the mortgage and the estate was offered at public sale. The times were hard, money tight, and everybody poor, crops had not been harvested, and your father was the only bidder. The estate was knocked down to him for five thousand dollars. It was worth even then Fifty Thousand! There was a great deal of indignation expressed throughout the community. Men believed that the acquisition of the property had been from the first the incentive to previous small loans. Your father was practically ostracized, and I have reason to believe his death, occurring five years later, may have been hastened by his chagrin."

"Did he never offer restitution?"

"None that I know of. He moved at once over to Beechwood. From the sale of farm utensils, household effects, etc., Benson realized a sum with which he bought a small place not far from Berkeley Castle. I have learned that his whole life was completely changed. He is said to be extremely sour and morose, — living to himself, unapproachable and unapproached. No children except one daughter, lately married,

I understand, to one Wilson. I don't know which family of Wilsons."

Douglas sat with his head bowed upon his bosom. Beads of perspiration gathered on his knit brows, and his mouth was set and hard. He sat thus so long that the Judge was at a loss to divine the trend of his thoughts. The poor Judge felt keen sympathy for the handsome bowed head. "What was the amount of Mr. Benson's indebtedness to my father?" he asked, without changing his position or raising his eyes.

"Papers were drawn up in a final settlement which you will find in the clerk's office. The amount due was something over five thousand dollars, and the difference waived by your father. The transaction was strictly legal, — nobody questioned that, — but the sentiment of the community was decided. No time and little notice had been given Benson to raise the money. It was denounced in the sternest terms — and his creditor's action was freely branded as 'infamous.' The hints to that effect which you have received are the dying ripples — let us hope — of a great wave of indignation."

"*Which was fully justified!*" said Douglas, as he rose and with nervous hands grasped the

back of his chair. "You said you no longer practised law — but you will, I trust, draw up a paper for me."

"Certainly — with pleasure."

"Then," said Douglas, with his fine face uplifted, "I no longer own Beechwood! I give it back to Mr. Benson."

The Judge started from his seat. "My dear sir! Think well before you do so irreparable a thing! You will surely regret it! Beechwood is the finest estate in the county. When I last saw it, it seemed to me the fields just smiled up to the Creator. The house is one of the best, most substantial in Virginia. Your manager has been judicious, I learn. You have lived freely, travelled, and yet saved something. Your future is bright. There is talk already of sending you to Congress in Jack Randolph's place."

"All this I know," Douglas replied, — "all this and more. But I cannot be moved. Tomorrow Wingfield will commence removing my stock and furniture to Harry's place at Cross Roads, and as soon as your paper is ready, I will sign it, and thank you to see it is delivered to Mr. Benson. It is not necessary I should see him?"

“Not at all! The paper — a brief one — will need only your signature.”

“Then why not write it now? You will do me a great favour. The day is young. You will soon be occupied with your judicial duties. You see, dear Judge, I shall hope to keep the matter between ourselves until I give possession, and I must rely upon your confidential friendship.”

“Surely, my boy, and as a friend, I feel it my duty to warn you of consequences before you do this thing. You must remember every embarrassment and complication. The world *may* applaud you as magnificent, with a romantic sense of honour, but it is just as likely to esteem you quixotic, eccentric, foolish. If the latter opinion prevails, good-bye to political preferment or legal success. It takes the genius of a John Randolph to make men excuse eccentric behaviour.”

Douglas listened long and respectfully to more in this strain, but calmly persisted in requesting the Judge to prepare a transfer *in fee simple* of the plantation of Beechwood and all the buildings thereon, reserving only the enclosure on the hill already tenanted by the graves of his parents. Upon this the Judge's

manner totally changed. Springing like a boy from his chair, he embraced the young man, dashed his hand across his eyes, and together they proceeded to the details of the transfer. Punctilious as he had learned to be in keeping the secrets of his clients, he could not, after Douglas left, resist the temptation to confide to his tearful wife an account of the unique transaction, — “the finest thing,” he declared, “I have ever known in my profession. Nothing nobler will ever be recorded in the books. The boy did not hesitate an instant! No painstaking search to find the path of duty! No reading his Bible and saying his prayers over it! He made me feel that I wronged him by even a suggestion of any other course.”

“Home, Saladin!” said Douglas, as he vaulted into the saddle and felt his first pang — “*Home!*”

He arrived late in the evening — having favoured the horses by a long rest during the heat of the day, beside a stream in the woods — and was again in the little library with his slight supper which he left untasted. He felt no need of sleep. Dismissing his valet and sending old Caleb grumbling home to his own cabin, he folded his arms and leaned back in the armchair in which he had stolen so many a nap when a

tired boy. Candles burned in branched silver candelabra. A little silver tray with "snuffers" lay beside them, and on the table were writing materials.

He had a letter to write. Harry must be fully informed of everything, and the reasons that forced his brother's action. All this he told concisely but fully, and then paused to think in what words he might best comfort the boy. As he raised his eyes, they were met by the dark eyes of the portrait,—and to Douglas's excited imagination the eyes wore a new expression. He looked at them, wondering he had not before observed their depth, and then turned to his open letter.—“And now, Hal,” he wrote, “I fancy I feel your hearty slap on my shoulder and hear you say, ‘Bully for you, brother! It is all right! You have done nobly. You have righted a great wrong.’ But remember, Harry, I must never be commended. Praise of me implies censure of our father. It is not for us to judge him. He is not here to vindicate himself. Nobody knows all the truth. He may have had reasons of which we know nothing. We must allow no one to discuss the matter with us. We stand alone in the world, you and I, and what-

ever is won from that world must be of our own winning, at its own value and not because of our misfortune — not by contrast with our father! Whatever the world may have thought of him, to us he must be always our honoured father. *Our mother loved him!* And he died so young. Had he lived, he might have done just what I have been moved to do.”

Douglas, like the sons of Noah, walked backward that he might not *see* — although he knew — his father's shame.

The lights soon attracted the nocturnal beetles of the South, so he extinguished them and sat in darkness until the beams of the late rising moon flooded the room. The elation which always accompanies the conception of a high thought and consequent performance of a noble action had not yet subsided. The “soul's star” was still in the ascendant! It had not gone down and abandoned the finite mortal to the powers of darkness — to fear, doubt, sense of defeat, helpless loneliness.

He fully vindicated Dr. Berkeley. Shirley — pure, peerless — could never have come to be mistress in these halls won by fraud. He had lost her; but of that he would not now think. He could set up her altar in his heart if not his

home, and dedicate to her all that was best in his life.

But as the night wore on, the soul's star moved to its setting. Thoughts of damaged reputation, of lost prestige, of failure surged over him. He could dimly see the portrait of his father as it looked down upon him over the book-shelves. "Oh, my father!" he cried out in anguish, "how could you?" The moon passed from behind a little cloud as he spoke, and by the wavering light, he fancied a smile on the closed lips. The eyes were deep and sad, — but surely the lips smiled. Lest it should have been the dazzle, the glamour that comes in overweared eyes, he closed his own for a moment! When he opened them — there was the smile again!

He clasped his hands behind his neck and leaned far back in his chair, fascinated by the new expression of his father's portrait. "Ah!" he sighed, "I understand! I know it now! Thank God! It is because there has been atonement, restitution!"

The moon and stars sank to their setting, and the room grew chill and dark. As he fixed his eyes upon the portraits, they seemed to slip from their frames and descend to the floor. He felt the touch of his father's hand upon his head,

his mother's sweet lips on his cheek. "Until the day dawn and the shadows flee away," she murmured. Whispers of love, gratitude, hope, filled his ears. Then through the open windows a slight figure floated in and laid her head on his breast. *Shirley! Shirley!* What does she whisper? "'Till a' the seas gang dry, my love —" and as he tries to clasp her to his heart he wakes, and it is good old Caleb at the window, looking in with pity and much reproach.

But he has had his dream! The day had dawned — the shadows fled away. Now for his faithful overseer Wingfield, and the beginning of the flight from Beechwood.

CHAPTER XIII

1.

TRAVELLERS in the forties to the wonderful Virginia springs had none of the blessings that now ameliorate the discomfort of the long journey in the extreme heat of midsummer. George Pullman, the traveller's greatest benefactor, had not yet been born. The passenger must sit bolt upright night and day, and take all the dust and smoke that were his portion.

When he first discerned the dim outline of the Blue Ridge Mountains, bounding the vast, sun-baked plains, he felt that his trials were at an end. Tell me not of the salt breeze that sweeps the desolate sea! The breeze from the mountain top seems to come direct from heaven itself—pure, cool, and fragrant.

And then when the noble range of the Blue Ridge Mountains is passed, and the fertile rolling country beyond, the railroad winds in and out among the foot-hills of the Alleghanies, and finally, ascending always, through the mountains themselves. Every turn in the road—which then passed over the path of Spotswood's

Knights of the Golden Horseshoe — reveals an enchanting glimpse of mountains braided in and out together, rapid, sparkling streams, little green valleys; and humble homes of poverty, where the mysterious drama of life, generation after generation, is enacted in all its stages from the cradle to the grave; where maidens grow up like the mountain flowers and the sons of God perceive that they are fair, and childhood laughs and plays, and old age dreams. Mrs. Berkeley thought of it all, as she looked out of the small car window, and wished for her husband, who could spare only the month of August for a holiday; Shirley — well, we can only guess at Shirley's thoughts; Dorothea was tired and missed the Colonel, often recurring in her thoughts to his tall figure as he stood on the platform and waved them good-bye; Milly thought anxiously about the understudy she had left in her household department, busied herself gathering the shawls and pillows which she had provided for the comfort of her party, and watchfully cared for Dorothea.

“Take in yo' haid, Miss Dolly. Does you want to go to the White Sulphur Springs without no haid? What you lookin' at, anyhow?”

“The long line of cars when they go around

the hill. They look just like a big caterpillar with a horn on his head — poking his nose through a field of daisies.”

“Lawd! Lawd! Dat chile! Nemmine! You’ll git a cinder in yo’ eye bimeby, and then we’ll hear talkin’.”

At last the labouring engine reached an open plain high above the sea-level, and slowed up, puffing and hissing.

“White Sul-phurr!” cried the porter, and immediately our passengers found themselves among friends.

“Howdy, Mrs. Berkeley; gimme your checks. Doctor comin’ bimeby? Hi! Sis Milly Thomson! Is you back here ergin? This way! Plenty of room in the stage. We fotch Big Tom along to-day,” and into “Big Tom,” an enormous omnibus, they were quickly bundled with many passengers, — most of whom had long been habitués of the South’s most famous watering-place.

Each passenger seemed delighted as the familiar buildings associated with so many happy summers were recognized. — “There’s the old church — there’s Virginia Row.” “There’s our cottage,” said Milly. “Lawd! Don’t she look natural? But mighty little!”

At the door of the hotel there were more welcoming greetings. Mrs. Berkeley shook hands with the maids and porters. The delicate little lady at the news stand, the clerk at the desk, all were old friends. A negro lad, Isaiah, a new acquisition, was detailed to collect her bags and "show her to her cottage" a few yards away. The boy regarded her narrowly and considered, from her appearance, that she was good for at least a quarter of a dollar. Much exercised upon this point, he answered with great politeness her rapid questioning: "Who are in the Colonnade this year? Who has the first cottage on Virginia Row, etc."

"Lawd, Mistis, I believe you knows more about dis place dan I does."

"I shouldn't wonder! I have been coming here ever since I was born."

Isaiah saw his opportunity: "Is you? Dat mus' 'a' been as much as foteen years ago!"

Of course no self-respecting silver quarter could lie mute in a lady's pocket after this! Isaiah felt that his fortune was made. This was simply a retaining fee. Contingent fees, fees for actual service, fees merely complimentary, stretched out before him like the widening tail of a comet. But Milly, arriving at the

moment, waved him away peremptorily. "Run along now about yo' business. Don't hang round this cottage pestering Miss Mary an' the chillens." At that moment another coloured lad appeared with a large bunch of mountain azalea and "the Captain's compliments," — another "quarter" exhibited uncontrollable restlessness; the porters who had waited her coming then arrived with the trunks — several more quarters, — one for each; until Milly dropped the curtains before the doors, — an understood hint that the inmates had retired for rest and repose.

A big hotel and nearly a hundred cottages have clustered around the spring of sulphur water, which was discovered more than two hundred years ago by white men hunting with the then friendly Shawnee Indians. A beautiful undulating, green valley surrounds the spring, shaded by noble oaks of great age; with here and there a few magnificent pines, each one high enough, hoary enough to claim kinship with the storied "Lonesome Pine" of the Kentucky author. Around the little cuplike valley the hill rises gently, and the cottages have seated themselves against it, their doors in the rear opening on a level with the ground, and the little

pillared porticos in front ascended by steps, many or few as the hill rises or falls. When a cottage encountered one of the big trees, the latter was not sacrificed, but the house gathered itself together at its knees, took it into its embrace, treating it with too much respect to permit it to be boarded around its rough brown coat.

The big hotel, with arcades reminding one of the cloistered convents of California, stands in the centre of the circle of cottages, its chief attraction a noble ballroom, with a perfect floor polished by the happy feet of many generations of dancers.

On one side of the valley rises the Greenbrier Mountain, and on the other Kate's Mountain, where, according to tradition, one Kate Caldwell hid all one dreadful night from the savages. A little farther west the sun sets behind "The Sleeping Giant." An ambitious row of two-story cottages are still known as the Caldwell cottages. A beautiful member of this South Carolina family, a lady as charming as she was lovely, once complained that she found no pleasant walks around her favourite summer home, — nothing but the little round of cottage-paths, or the stony, dusty road beyond. Her

admirers were many and potential. Exacting a promise from her that she would remain three days in her own rooms, the crest of a hill was cleared of undergrowth, paths levelled and carpeted with pine needles, seats placed between trees, little nooks given romantic names, and the famous "Lover's Walk" presented for her pleasure.

The resort commenced its life with many primitive peculiarities which still remain. At the time of which this story tells, wealthy Southerners, senators, statesmen, rich planters, presidents, and politicians filled the hotel and cottages, many of them bringing their own horses and servants. There were no bells in the cottages, and when the services of a porter or messenger were wanted, "Oh-h-h, George!" or "Oh-h-h, Ben!" as the case might be would be echoed around the valley, and George and Ben would materialize, sauntering in a leisurely way across the lawn.

"The White Sulphur," said Charles Dudley Warner, "is the only watering-place remaining in the United States where there is what may be called an 'assembly' such as might formerly be seen at Saratoga, or at Ballston Spa in Irving's young days. For the better part of a century

it has been, as everybody knows, the typical Southern resort, the rendezvous of all that was most characteristic of the South, the meeting-place of its politicians, the haunt of its belles, the arena of gayety, intrigue, and fashion. In the days of its greatest fame it was at once the finest and most aristocratic assembly in the world, for although life there was somewhat in the nature of a picnic, it had its very well-defined and ceremonious code of etiquette." Everybody was willing — nay, anxious — to know everybody else, *provided* some one well-known person stood sponsor for the stranger — as indicated by evidence of even a slight acquaintance.

The young girl was the crowning charm and attraction of the place, and should she be well-born, beautiful, and well-dressed, — for as one said, "an ill-dressed woman would spoil the finest landscape," — she would be, were she rich or poor, enthroned as "a reigning belle" and rated little short of a goddess. If she were "a sweet girl but not pretty," she could find friends, drink the waters, and perhaps improve; but if the Fates had been really hard, and given her no personal charm whatever, why — well, she needn't perhaps drown herself in the Green-

brier River, but "the White Sulphur is no place for her" was decided by the company of knitting and embroidering mamas on the shaded gallery, — "a jury for conviction every time."

The season had not really opened when Mrs. Berkeley arrived; that could not be until General Robertson, coming from Baltimore, and folding a blue silk sash across his ample chest, offered his arm to the prettiest damsel for the first german. The band was on hand, however, and gave delightful morning and afternoon concerts in the little temples built for their shelter on the lawn. Romantic and martial music gains immensely from the entourage of mountains. The band discoursed fascinating waltzes in the ballroom every night, but there was more social life and less dancing than would rule as soon as August brought a larger crowd. Girls gathered in clusters to talk over their important matters; the few young men were shy and reticent, recognizing themselves as the weaker party; the older people enjoyed the delicious coolness and purity of the atmosphere, and all delighted in the charming drives through the romantic country, returning home at night laden with clematis, wild yellow azalea, crimson

lilies, tiger lilies, and the splendid rhododendron, which reaches in the Virginia mountains great size and beauty.

Seated in a sheltered corner of the veranda, Mrs. Berkeley availed herself of the presence of an old friend who had preceded her by some days, and learned the name of the strangers as they passed.

“That,” said the old beau, “is Miss Kitty Burns, the belle of Louisville; here for the first time, however. That handsome old gentleman is General Burns, her father. They grow fine men and women in the blue-grass country. Oh, here comes my girl! Isn’t she lovely? That’s Pearl Eustis, of Charleston. I presented her myself last season at the St. Cecilia. A perfect beauty — always dresses in white and wears lilies, real or artificial. I can’t stop the procession to introduce her now. She and I will call at your cottage. — Ah! Here comes the belle of New Orleans. Miss Esmé King, Queen of the Mardi Gras — stunning, isn’t she? All three of these girls are going to be great friends with Shirley. That? — a late-comer nobody seems to know much about. We call her the Evening Star. She never appears until night. She’s promenading now with a rich cotton man

from New York. Her name is — really, I don't remember !”

The old beau looked thoughtfully at the handsome stranger as she passed. “A fine figure of a woman,” he commented, “always wears a star in her hair, paste probably, — not very brilliant, — and black velvet. Very handsome, but — I don't know ! Isn't she just a leetle — pardon me — just a *leetle* too — what you call — *décolleté* ?”

Mrs. Berkeley shook her head. “Don't ask me ! I am from the rural districts, you know, and may be just a leetle — pardon me — just a *leetle* old-fashioned.”

“You never can be anything but lovely, Mary,” said her old friend, affectionately. “When Charley comes, I mean to introduce him to some rheumatic old maids who'll monopolize him, and you and I will be boy and girl again and have a real good old time.”

“Agreed,” laughed Mrs. Berkeley, “but I suspect I shall have to lend you to Shirley, *faute de mieux* ! Her knight doesn't seem to materialize. Evidently she dreams of him.”

“No,” said Shirley, slowly, “my knight is not here !” and rising, she excused herself and walked slowly across the lawn to her cottage.

"Your girl is a beauty, Mary — patrician to her finger-tips. Give her a good rest before the crowd comes. Does she need the waters? Pretty bilious region, that low country of yours."

"She needs something," sighed Mrs. Berkeley. "Dear, dear! Charley must come along and give her a tonic."

"What did you do with Jim? I suppose Dorothea is too old for a nurse, eh? — and he's looking for another situation."

"James will never take another situation. He belongs to Berkeley Castle. I left Aunt Prissy who can never be persuaded that peaches can be brandied or green sweetmeats preserved by anybody else; and James, like a saint, stayed behind to take care of her, look after the house, keep Andy straight, comfort old Mrs. Ponsonby, gossip with Betty Oliver, and incidentally overlook his own plantation affairs. Really I think he preferred it; — he said he did at any rate. He never enjoyed this place. He treasures a funny printed letter Dorothea wrote him year before last from the White Sulphur — 'Dear Cousin James, This is the disgustingest place in all this world.' She has changed her opinion, but he adheres to his."

"Well, we'll have Charley on the first, — just a

week off now,—and I'll report for duty to Shirley. By that time I expect she will be ready to beat me off with sticks. I hear her! 'No old beaux of Mama's — no far-away cousins!' However, she'd do well to be civil. She may need me on the staff of her detective police, or, to put it mildly, her Information Bureau."

"You might practise on me. The handsome unknown interests me. Who is with her here?"

"She is with Mr. and Mrs. Stubbs in Baltimore Row. They have quite a romantic history. They both began life in a spinning factory in North Carolina and worked at the same loom. This is a great country! That was twelve years ago. He rose rapidly from spools to the raw material. He speculated in cotton, invested wisely, and is a very rich man. You see what he looks like? Well, his wife is his counterpart,—short, thick-set, spherical, but with a good-natured face. There you are! That is all I know about them. But this place will soon lose its prestige if the *sans culottes* descend upon us. You may say what you please about the magical sulphur waters;—it is really the fine exclusive society to be found here that attracts us."

"And attracts others, too," said Mrs. Berke-

ley; "good may result to them — and no harm to the old aristocrats."

"I'm not so sure," said her friend. "When the porcelain jar and the delft pot — or was it brass? — went swimming together, you know what happened. Better wait awhile and see how the handsome lady behaves."

"But you see if everybody was friendly and kind at such places as this, handsome ladies would be surer to behave; they would have social obligations, restraining influences. However," she added, smiling, "it's idle to preach to you, Harry — on these subjects at least. I've laboured with you all my life and you don't improve a bit. Where is our beauty's husband?"

"Ah, now you're too much for me. There may be 'no sich person.' He may be a myth. She may be a widow."

"I hope she is not already a widow," said Mrs. Berkeley.

"Well, you know as much about her as I do — or likely shall. Her husband is somewhere in the world, I imagine, otherwise we should have our lady in serge and crêpe — instead of velvet and brilliants."

CHAPTER XIV

DEAR COUSIN JAMES,

I hope you will receive this letter on the first — the day Papa leaves you. You will drive him to the depot in the early morning and then you will walk over to Miss Betty Oliver's, and feeling a little low in your mind, sit on her porch-bench and wait for the Northern mail. Miss Betty will make a perfect cup of coffee for you, — I wish I were there to share it, — and you will listen with angelic patience to all her wailings and woes, and *then* you will return to the post-office and get this letter! I wish I had something very interesting to tell you, but nothing thrilling has happened.

The dear old mountains are just as blue — just as beautiful as ever. I love the meadow drive because there we get the finest view of the Sleeping Giant. The physician of this place is an old, old darling, — Dr. Moorman, — with a long white beard. He might be Noah or Moses or some other ancient Patriarch. Mama sends me to him every morning to be “looked over” — lest I should be ill (which I'm not), and we have become great cronies. “Aren't there some legends about these mountains?” I asked him yesterday. “Of course,” he said; “a fine one, about old Titan

yonder. Come down to the spring with me and drink a glass of water like a good girl and I'll tell you." Under the trees he told me a wonderful story. His father had learned it from an old Indian. The Great Spirit was angry once because a brave warrior fell in love with a pretty Indian maid and spent his time with her in this valley. Two arrows were sent to kill the lovers — one reached the heart of the brave, but the other missed the girl and buried itself in the earth. She withdrew it to kill herself, and the Sulphur Spring gushed out. Her lover was buried towards the setting sun, and trees have grown up over him. He is the "Sleeping Giant." She was doomed to haunt this place as long as the spring flows. When it ceases, she may join her lover in the Happy Hunting-grounds — and therefore we all come here, year after year, to help exhaust the sulphurous spring. The funny little white flower, Indian Pipe, springs up in her footsteps. I often gather them at Lover's Leap.

Tell Andy I am going to grow morning-glories and nasturtiums all around the cottage, — and I think he might send me a few of his dark-coloured nasturtiums. Here they have only the light yellow variety. We walk down to "Dry Creek" — Dorothea and I — and get them from the only garden near the place. You remember "Dry Creek"? — The big river that changed its mind and flowed in some other direction has never returned. The poor forsaken stones seem to lie there expecting it.

But you are not to suppose because I know what is expected of a young lady, and write genteelly about legends, morning-glories, nasturtiums, and inconstant rivers that nothing out of the ordinary happens here. We have had great fun over our Dove German, instigated and carried out by our French Countess (oh, yes! We have a French Countess,—only she was born in Kentucky; and we have a Bonaparte too—old Mrs. Bonaparte) because we girls numbered some thirty or more, and there were just twelve men, counting the night clerk. There were plenty of things they might have done for entertainment, but they lay about on the grass all day and promenaded the galleries at night — never asking the girls to dance, giving no little card parties or suppers. So Madame la Comtesse gave a beautiful morning german and left them all out! We had the band, champagne and biscuits, and lovely favours. Half the girls personated men in dark gowns and little derby hats. The girls wore their prettiest muslins. The men hung round the windows outside. They were not admitted even as spectators.

The stages came in while the german was in progress, and two tall girls — strangers — entered, and Madame courteously invited them to join the dancers. They wore large hats, veils, and light dresses, and danced remarkably well. In the middle of a figure I dropped my handkerchief and instantly one of the newcomers jumped up and skated across the floor to pick it up! — Tom Burns

and Larry Thomson had been taken to Mrs. Brown's cottage, laced within an inch of their lives, and dressed in her muslin gowns with white stockings and slippers!

Mr. Blake has been here as long as we have; — of course pretending he knew precisely the date of our coming. He has brought his Napoleonic servant, a groom, trap, and horses. You remember everybody mounts for the afternoon ride or drive in front of the drawing-room, and I was standing there waiting to drive Mama and Dorothea when Mr. Blake appeared, his groom leading two elegant horses — dark wine-coloured beauties, larger but not as splendid-looking as Primrose (the darling!). Mr. Blake led them up near me. "Here are the best thoroughbreds Kentucky blue-grass can raise!" he said. "They have never been named. They have waited for you to name them."

I had an inspiration. "Charge, Chester, charge! On, Stanley, on."

That evening a bottle of champagne was sent to our table with "the compliments of Chester and Stanley" — and Stanley has been placed at my exclusive disposal for the whole season. "Isn't that charming?" you will say — but somehow I don't care much about it; and cannot decide to accept it anyway until Papa comes.

I think Dorothea must give you more of her confidences than she gives me. I see her every morning in the writing-room, her face close to her paper and her curls falling down

upon it, and from her lofty duchess-like manner I infer she is laying her commands upon you. I hope she has ordered some figs from the Berkeley Castle. These mountains never saw a fig. But dear me! If you are reading all this at the depot, Aunt Prissy will be sending Uncle Isham to look for you. She will think you've run away with Miss Betty!

Don't get lonesome, dear Cousin James! We shall remain here only during August. Find some nice new books for Aunt Prissy. Ride over to Ridgely and the Manor and Bellevue. Spend a day at the mill with Mrs. Bangs and "Ma'y Jane," and tell me all the funny things Mrs. Bangs says, and whether she has heard from Mr. Bangs. Don't neglect Mrs. Ponsonby — Don't forget Primrose's sugar — in short be very good, and soon, soon you will see us all again — and very glad to see you will be

Your devoted

SHIRLEY.

P.S. To tell the gospel truth, honour bright, I'd rather spend my afternoons with you in our old fairy glen than on Mr. Blake's beautiful Stanley — for, you see, his master will always, always be along."

The Colonel read and re-read this letter, and shook his head. "A delightful letter!" he thought. "Just like Shirley in her kind remembrance of her neighbours. But why is Beech-

wood left out in her list of places I must visit? Douglas is one of her very earliest friends, too! She should not have forgotten him. I must remind her." The poor Colonel! He thought Shirley was missing him!

On the evening of the first day of August, General Robertson, arriving from Baltimore, tied a blue sash across his chest, and gloved, booted, and cravatted to perfection, entered the drawing-room, where a great crowd in full ball dress was assembled and awaiting him. The stately wife of an American minister, fresh from a foreign court, placed her ivory hand upon his arm; and they led the grand march from the drawing-room to the ballroom, through the long convent-like corridor, and the crowded galleries beyond. Conducting her to a seat in front of the music-stand, he stood beside her — a portly gentleman, who had opened the ball at the White Sulphur every season for thirty years. After the company crowded in, he excused himself to the Kentucky lady, and crossing the room, bowed low to Shirley, and together they made the round of the room alone — the old beau dancing with the lightness of thistle-down, and the precision of a master.

Shirley flushed like a wild rose at the unex-

pected honour which meant much to a young débutante. Her partner was quite capable, albeit stout and past middle age, of exhibiting her dancing to the best advantage. His courtier-like deference was charming, a fine object-lesson to younger men. Old Harper, the ball-room custodian, standing near the door, nodded his head delightedly. "I tell *you*," he said to Mr. Blake, "there goes the best blood in old Virginny, and the top notch from Maryland! Can't beat 'em, suh, — can't beat 'em!"

"I should like jolly well to beat *him*," laughed Blake, who, having visited London, affected British slang. But the incident, ordinary and insignificant as it was, confirmed him in his Virginia resolution. He would devote his summer to this distingué belle of the White Sulphur, and what is more, if she wore well, win her in the end. She had been indifferent — at times, almost repellent. All the better! He could imagine few things tamer than an easy conquest. And really, after all, a time must come when a man must settle down.

The next day a note was placed at every table, announcing a garden party on the fifteenth of August. Guests were requested to make lists of all their friends, and handsome invitation

cards were ready for their use. Special excursion rates had been promised by the railroad. The recently inaugurated President of the United States would occupy his own cottage on the hill beyond the spring, and in his suite would probably be officers who had won spurs in the late wars with Mexico. A committee of ladies was headed by the Kentucky wife of the late foreign Minister, and included Mrs. Berkeley from Virginia, and representative ladies from all of the Southern States; also from Pennsylvania, for a very charming Philadelphia woman was a cottager this summer. To this committee the manager looked for suggestions, that this notable occasion might be worthy of their honoured guest.

At the very first meeting of the committee, the house lists, prepared by the members, were revised, and Mrs. Berkeley observed that the name of Mrs. Stubbs and her friend Mrs. Talbot were left out—the only omissions among the visitors. She called attention to this.

“O dear!” said one. “You surely can’t expect us to have *those* people—that common little Dutch creature Stubbs and that bold-looking made-up minx that nobody knows.”

"I think they are Virginians," said Mrs. Berkeley, kindly.

"Oh, but," said the other, "they aren't from any of the old distinguished families of Virginia. Did you ever meet them before? I thought not! We don't want any of the riff-raff at our ball. Let them keep their places. They ought to know them well enough by this time."

"How will you make any woman know exactly where she belongs? Ideas might differ!" said the lady from Philadelphia. She had her own notions about some of the methods of the "porcelain variety." "How are you going to work to make people keep their places?"

"Oh! if they are troublesome — why — 'give them a little more grape, Captain Bragg.'"

"I am sorry," said Mrs. Berkeley, gravely, ignoring the laugh that followed the quotation from a famous military order of the President, "but for myself, I cannot consent to inflict so deep a wound. Of course, the proprietor is careful in choosing his guests — otherwise none of us would be here. If they are left out, I shall have — very reluctantly — to withdraw from the committee. I cannot hurt any one's feelings. As to Mrs. Stubbs, a more inoffensive human being I cannot imagine. She seems to be the

soul of kindness. Why should she not have a pleasant evening as well as the rest of us who have so many?"

"Mrs. Berkeley is quite right," said the lady from Philadelphia. "Let us be guided by her. I move to add the rejected names to our list," and thus the matter was settled, but with reluctant acquiescence on the part of more than one haughty dame. "This place is getting to be too democratic for me," said one, complaining to Major Selden. "If I am compelled to hear all winter discussions upon our common rights of 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness,' that is no reason I must have my own summer happiness spoiled by being yoked along with the *canaille*. I am amazed at Mrs. Berkeley! Who is that Mrs. Talbot? Of course no woman is permitted to criticise another who happens to be unusually handsome — and knows it."

"If 'ladies be but young and fair, they have the gift to know it,'" said the Major, who did not relish an implied censure of his friend. "That's just as true to-day as in the time of Jaques the melancholy."

"Oh, yes, yes — of course! But you see this factory girl, this Stubbs woman, is neither young nor fair. As to her gifts — nobody has yet per-

ceived them. As manager of a ceremonious military ball, she is quite out of the question. Really, there's reason in all things."

But the arrival of Hazazar, the costumer from Baltimore, put an end to all minor discussions. Hazazar came prepared to transform everybody into fisher-maidens, milk-maidens, flower maidens, night, morning-stars, follies, Dianas, Minervas, Queens, Courtiers, Kings, peasants, what not? Of course the President and his party were excused from costuming; also the ladies of the committee, — these constituting the reception committee, — before whom all the others were to pass in review.

"I suppose you two will rebel and expect at the last moment to be forgiven," said Mrs. Berkeley to her husband and Major Selden.

"Not a bit of it," said the Major; "I shall go as the Ancient Mariner — 'long and lank and brown!' I have my own story to tell of a long voyage and —"

"Then I shall go as the Wedding-guest," laughed the Doctor; "for nobody else will listen to Harry's story. My sympathies have always been with the wedding-guest; belated, maybe, and forging along in a hurry, to be best man perhaps at his friend's wedding, and held

up by an old seaman! Ah! many's the time that Harry has left me a wiser man — and a sadder, because I hadn't more time for his capital stories. Now I shall make up for lost opportunities. I shall cling to him like a Siamese twin, or a burr, as I am agricultural — or yet more appropriately, a plaster."

Shirley listened with intense interest. She had early secured — mainly influenced by the fact that she could weave a pearl coif from her wax beads — the only Juliet costume in the collection. It was exacted "that no one should reveal the choice of a costume." In all cases, when a costume was requested that had been already selected, it was simply "not in the collection," the time was short, the stock limited, and another choice must be quickly made. But Hazazar had an assistant. Money is mighty in any emergency. A liberal "tip," secretly conveyed, elicited enlightening information to Mr. Blake, who immediately secured the only Romeo costume — a fact which the amiable assistant instantly conveyed to Juliet.

Secure in his position, he could afford to amuse himself with Shirley. "I think," he said, "you would make a charming Miranda." Shirley gravely agreed with him.

"Then I shall be Ferdinand! That is decided!"

"You are ambitious," said Shirley, looking at him critically. "As I recall Ferdinand he was quite beyond the ordinary individual — 'a thing divine,' noble in adversity, strong, dark."

"Oh, I suppose," interrupted Blake, irritably, "you would be quite willing to see me personate Caliban."

"I don't remember much about Caliban. — He was pretty awful, I suppose, but I have no personal grievance against him. He could sing a reasonably good song. He has my sympathy in regard to scraping trenchers and washing dishes."

Blake always recovered from the irritation of these little passages at arms with renewed spirit. "Too light winning makes the prize light," was one of his favourite quotations. On the present occasion, Shirley had a great desire to find some character which would excuse her close companionship with her father and Colonel Selden. She had learned to avoid, as far as possible, private interviews with Mr. Blake. On horseback she could always gallop ahead — in his trap she would never accompany him. For the "Lover's Walk" she managed to be

always engaged to some young lad, or Tom Burns the irrepressible, or some newcomer. She was thus unconsciously enhancing her own charm in his eyes. The more she eluded him, the more ardent was his pursuit.

Here now was an occasion demanding deep thought and subtle behaviour. She settled the possibility of appearing as Juliet by presenting her costume to a dear girl, whom she knew to be too poor for anything so gorgeous, and re-read her little pocket edition of Coleridge, a present from Douglas. "I might be the 'frightful fiend' that 'closely treads behind,'" she thought; "no, no, that's impossible. The sailor that shot the albatross? — equally out of the question; he was the Mariner. Ah-h! I have it!

"He holds him with his glittering eye
And listens like a three years' child."

I shall be the three years' child."

"I don' know what I'm cuttin' up your bes' summer frock for, Miss Shirley!" complained Milly, as she ripped the lace from a handsome mull gown. "Ef you'se aimin' to make me put it on Dolly, I tell you now flat-footed I ain' gwine to do it. I ain' gwine sacrefice that chile to none o' these distracted doin's at this place."

“You’re going to do exactly as I want you to, Mammy! You are going to make a short baby-waist, to a plain, short skirt with a hem, and three tucks above the hem. And what is more, nobody, honour-bright-cross-your-heart, except Mama, is to see it.”

“I got no call to cross my heart for you or anybody else, Miss Shirley. I’s e a Baptist, an’ you knows it. Go ’long, chile, you knows what I gwine do! I gwine do jest what you tells me. You ain’ got no call to be cuttin’ up good cloes! Miss M’Comas had a lot o’ trouble sewin’ on all this lace.”

CHAPTER XV

ALAS! Poor mortals know but too well the fate of many of their best-laid schemes. The morning of the great day opened with rain of that steady persistent kind that precludes all hope of sunshine. Garden-party, indeed, with flower-garlanded walks, lighted by coloured lanterns! The proprietor met all questions with smiling serenity. He had but one request — to be allowed to advance the mid-day meal to one o'clock and permission to close the doors of the public rooms until nine. A collation would be sent to each cottage and room in the afternoon.

When the company assembled in the evening, the biggest kind of a surprise awaited them. Coloured lanterns were thickly hung around the long veranda. Within, they were introduced into a garden. Birnam Wood had come to Dunsinane. Slender trees were bound to every one of the long, long rows of pillars, extending through sliding panels the whole length of the building, the floor was carpeted with green, and

growing flowers were tastefully arranged in the centre of green mounds. Festoons of flowers shaded the swinging lanterns. The President — the old hero of Buena Vista — in his throne chair looked down upon a scene gorgeous with colour; laughing, scintillating under the glamour of the many shaded lights. "How on earth did you manage to have these trees brought to-day?" he asked the proud proprietor. He could drive a Mexican column up the slope of a mountain, but he had never ordered a forest to march into a ballroom.

"Those trees have been lying in my cellar for several days," he was answered. "I could take no risks, you see."

The costumed company represented many characters, historic or fanciful. When Mr. Blake requested that he might follow Miss Berkeley or accompany her, the amiable announcer indulged him. To his unspeakable chagrin the party was announced in rapid succession as "The Ancient Mariner, The Wedding-guest, Romeo, with a three years' child that listens." Shirley had covered herself with an ample cloak which she dropped, too late for his escape, into Milly's hands. The President shouted with laughter. He was known to dislike society

conventions and ceremonies and had looked forward with dismay to this ball, and the part expected of himself. The trio before him was irresistibly comical.

Dismally lank, lean, and brown looked the Ancient Mariner, dressy and debonair the wedding-guest; while Shirley was simply entrancing in her baby shoes, blue sash, sleeves looped with blue ribbons, and amber beads. Her fine eyes danced with merriment, and her brown hair peeped out in little rings from her baby-cap.

"I wonder," whispered the Ancient Mariner to Shirley, "if he would be insulted if we explained ourselves to him. His knowledge of literature, Scott says, doesn't go much beyond good old Dilworth's spelling-book."

"He knows enough to understand children. Sh-h. He's beckoning to us now," said Shirley.

"Why amber, little girl?" asked the President, by way of earning a word from the pretty vision. "Is not coral the wear for a baby?"

"Yeth, thir," lisped the three-year-older, "but amber ith good for my croup!"

"Perhaps the baby would give an old soldier a kiss — old enough to be her grandfather?"

Shirley answered this with a charming curtsey, and stooping, touched with her lips the

President's hand. He was delighted. Raising her as if he were a king, he respectfully kissed her own little hand. The pretty episode was applauded, and the blushing girl would have gladly vanished in the crowd. The old warrior, however, seated her beside him to help him out, as he said. "That fellow at the door calls out the companies as they come on the field," he said, "but I do not follow him very well. I shall have to retire early and you will have plenty of dancing time."

She dropped her infantile lisp and manner, and met the old General on the plains of Mexico. She could repeat the stirring lines, beginning —

"Beneath the stern old mountains we met them in their
pride,
And rolled from Buena Vista back the battle's bloody
tide."

She was so ardently patriotic and the veteran so fatherly that she lost her shyness in her efforts to entertain him. "Ah, Mr. Attorney-General," he said to Reverdy Johnson, "we find an ally here in the Virginia mountains — a good Whig. We must have her at the White House next winter. Mrs. Taylor will send for her."

"We need her in the Cabinet," said the At-

torney-General, gravely. "There's a vacancy in Mrs. Johnson's establishment. The Vice-President's office is already ably filled by Mr. Fillmore."

Mr. Blake found his evening completely spoiled. He would have liked to avenge himself by devoted attentions to Miss Esmé King, or Miss Eustis, or Tom Burns's witty sister. — But he had asked no dances of those young ladies, and their cards were already full. Well, he could show Miss Berkeley that he too could be indifferent. He knew the President would release her at an early hour. If she thought he was waiting for her, she would find herself mistaken. He would not dance at all. He was too much offended to hover around her. The evening train from the South arrived near midnight, and he strolled forward to see the newcomers. The first man that sprang out of the omnibus and entered the office was Douglas Newton. Without being recognized, Blake returned to the ballroom. He felt that this might complicate matters. Shirley would have one more devoted attendant, and his own opportunities for interviews with her would be rarer.

Many windows opened from the great ballroom into the galleries that surrounded it on

three sides. The country people thronged these whenever anything unusual was expected, and every window was now filled with eager spectators — young men and young girls, old grey-beards and women with babies. No proprietor, since the existence of the hotel, had ever forbidden them. They were the gallery to the theatre, and watched the dances with gravity and perfect behaviour.

“What’s all this going on?” Douglas asked an old friend whom he found in the office — preferring a quiet smoke to the hot, crowded ballroom.

“Oh, they’ve captured the old hero, and are working hard for his amusement, — costuming, masquerading, and what not. He is perfectly delighted! You should have seen him kissing the hand of that lovely Miss Berkeley, with all the airs of an old courtier. You are quite sure you won’t smoke? This is a mild cigar — won’t keep you awake.”

“No, thank you — not to-night! You were saying —”

“Oh, about Miss Berkeley? She entered the ballroom dressed like a little child, looking like one of Titian’s angels, and he was so wrought upon, bless you, he asked for a kiss! — but, egad,

the young lady evaded it as cleverly as you can imagine, bowed her pretty head a moment over his hand, and curtsied in the most charmingly deferential manner. She was willing to salute the old soldier that far! He admired her extremely. All this to-do over him delights him. No more wars for him! More than ever he thanks God we are 'at peace with all the world and the rest of mankind,' as he said, you remember, at his inauguration last March. Bless his innocence! He heard the people laugh, but that they were laughing at him never entered his head."

Douglas felt himself too travel-soiled to appear in company, and it was too late to go to his distant room and refresh his toilet. He found a vacant spot in a window, and pulling his hat over his brows, he surveyed the gay scene within. The President and his party were to leave next morning, and they retired early. Shirley's friends had placed her in his chair and were gathered around her, full of interest in her conversation with the old General. She had removed her baby-cap, and her hair fell in soft undulations around her shoulders. It was the fashion of the hour to wear the hair braided and wound around the head like a coronet, but Doug-

las could remember Shirley as a little girl, and the little girl was again before him. Never had she seemed to him so adorable! A great tenderness, a great longing to protect her, swelled his heart. The country woman leaning in the window beside him heard a sigh, and regarded him with pity and perfect intelligence — “out thar in the dark,” she told her husband as they drove homeward, “an’ his sweetheart inside dancin’ with the other fellers! I cert’nly was sorry fer ’im. An’ he was a sight better lookin’ then any of the rest of ’em!”

CHAPTER XVI

WHEN Douglas called at the Berkeley cottage next morning, he found only Mammy and Dorothea ready to receive him, and they were just leaving the door for a walk to the Happy Gardens in the cool of the morning. A little boy with a wistful countenance led Dorothea by the hand. Douglas turned and accompanied them, Dorothea having gravely presented her companion. — “This is my friend Jack. I never can find Mama in the day to interduce him to her, and Shirley says she always interduces all her friends to Mama, and,” — but Milly, foreseeing a long explanation, broke in : —

“This yer’s the innercentest chile at this place. I dunno nothin’ ’bout his folks; they tells me I better look out, but this little boy cert’nly is a comfort to Dolly. He jest devoted to her, an’ she ain’t a bit o’ trouble to nobody when she got him to play wid. More’n that, my Mistis is above all that foolishness ’bout who she ’sociate wid. She ain’ feared she hurt herse’f by visitin’ even ole Miss Bangs.”

“So this is Jack,” said Douglas, kindly, “and

he has been taking care of my little Dorothea while I was away."

"Because you know," said Dorothea, "Shirley hasn't time to amuse me at all, an' the other children don't tell stories an' play moss-houses. Oh, I *do* like 'em — very much — but you see I *love* Jack!"

"I see," said Douglas, gravely; "that makes all the difference in the world. But is he only Jack? Has he no other name?"

"Tain't no matter what his name is," said Milly, hastily. "I knowed a boy once named Pat Grubble an' he was jus' as nice as any chile I ever want to see. Pretty is as pretty does — names ain' nothin'. Look at this yer low-down no 'count nigger that call hisself Napoleon Bonaparte Johnsing! *He* knows what *I* think of *him*! Ef he was a do'mat at my do', I wouldn't wipe my foot on him."

Douglas gathered that Dorothea's new friend was not of aristocratic lineage, but he respected the child's feelings too much to catechise him. The little boy, however, who had only waited for a pause in the conversation, now said simply, "My name is John Baker Stubbs," and added, anticipating the usual next question, "eight-goin'-on-nine."

Douglas thought him wonderfully small for so great an age. He shook him by the hand, saying, "I am very happy to make your acquaintance," received an approving glance from Dorothea, and leaving the party, turned aside into one of the by-paths of the Lover's Walk.

The grove was deserted. Usually couples who could find no other time or place for confidential talk might be found here and there on the seats under the trees, — little short benches *à deux* at discreet distances apart, — but after the midnight rout, sentiment was refreshing itself by a morning's sleep.

Douglas seated himself on one of the benches, and clasping his hands at the back of his neck, — his favourite attitude, — settled himself for an hour of profound thought. Why should he think more about it? Every step had been gone over again and again. Rumours had reached him from time to time of Blake's devotion to Shirley, of the rides together, of the rare flowers he showered upon her, coming daily on ice from the best florist in Baltimore, of his openly avowed intention to distance all competitors. Of Shirley's own attitude there seemed no doubt. What more could any girl desire? He was

accomplished, handsome, travelled; in good social position abroad. When the time came for him to "settle down," Shirley would find herself handsomely placed in New York or London or anywhere she pleased. Thus Dame Rumour threw the ball from one to another, until at last it had reached Beechwood.

"Now," he reflected, "the time has come for action. What must be my first step? Dr. Berkeley would believe me, of course. He would know me to be incapable of a selfish motive — out of all question now. He could forbid further acquaintance. Shirley would believe, too, — but suppose her affections have been engaged! She would break her heart! Better, a thousand times, it should break than she should marry a — No, no, she must be saved from that, be her very life the forfeit."

A footstep on the dried pine leaves, and Blake stood before him! He, too, had sought the deserted spot for uninterrupted meditation.

"Hello, Newton! When did you come? I didn't know you were expected," and he took the seat beside the other.

Ignoring the proffered hand and familiar greeting and action, Douglas rose and said sternly: —

"I was not expected. It is as well you should know at once that I am here because of your devoted attentions to my cousin."

"My word! This is interesting! Perhaps you will kindly enlighten me. Why, may I ask, can I not pay my devoirs to Miss Berkeley — especially as she has not forbidden them."

"You remember you lost a letter at Berkeley Castle," — Blake started, but immediately froze into stiff silence. Douglas repeated, "You lost a letter! It was opened before my eyes and read before I knew to whom it was written — by whom it was written. It was addressed to you, it was signed by —"

"*Stop!*" said Blake, rising in a towering rage, and losing all self-control. "Before you go a step farther let me demand your right, — as I should have done before this: first, to read my private letters; secondly, to interfere in any of my matters whatsoever."

"I have told you. I have no apology to make for a pure accident. Having been given knowledge denied others, I *have* the right to use it and protect my cousin."

"Cousin?" sneered Blake. "Cousin! Possibly her great-grandfather's second wife's sister-in-law might have been your great-grandmother.

She has given you no nearer right — of that I am sure. So, Mr. Douglas Newton, by your august permission, I shall e'en pursue my own sweet will at my own convenience."

"You shall not, by God," said Newton, confronting Blake with blazing eyes. "I wished to spare you — I did not desire to degrade you, but I shall at once go to Dr. Berkeley."

"Whe-w! *Degrade!* And has he, — have you, — no memories? Are a man's conquests as he lives through his golden years reckoned degradation or triumph? Come, come, Newton; don't affect to be an innocent fool. Haul down your haughty colours! A fair field is every man's right."

"You are a contemptible puppy! I mean it! How could you DARE permit me to introduce you to my friends? How dare you take advantage of that introduction — knowing, as you do, that I know *you*. It is war to the knife between you and me."

"War to the knife, is it? To the knife then let it be — or, if you prefer, the pistol! I wish you a very good morning, Mr. Newton! Tomorrow morning will be a better, when I shut your impudent mouth forever! My friend will call on you."

“Your challenge is accepted,” said Douglas, sternly. “I name Major Harry Selden as my second, and refer your ‘friend’ to him,” and, turning promptly, he pursued the outward path through the grove. This path, as he knew, led at the rear of the cottages to the President’s cottage on the hill. In last night’s hasty glance over the registry of arrivals, he had observed that Major Selden had a room in this cottage. The President and his party, who had left in the early train, had not needed the whole of the house and had not permitted Major Selden to be disturbed.

Hoping to find the Major at home, Douglas walked rapidly down the shaded path. Presently he heard children’s voices, and looking up, espied Milly, Dorothea, and Jack, with their hands full of honeysuckle, returning from the “Happy Gardens” in which the Lover’s Walk terminates. Had Douglas seen the Happy Gardens? Then they must turn right back with him — ’twasn’t far. He ought to see the old honeysuckles all lying on the ground in bloom. “Everybody has forgotten the honeysuckles but God, Mammy says! They were planted for a lady years and years and years ago, and every summer they bloom to let her know they don’t

forget — and she does know, Mammy says, up there where she is.”

“Look ’ere, chillern,” said Milly. “You ain’ gwine back. Come along home an’ git ready for dinner. What you talkin’ so much to yo’ cousin Douglas for, Dolly? Don’ you see he ain’ heerd a word you say?”

Douglas hastened along with one thought preëminent above all others — to get speech as speedily as possible with Major Selden and explain the liberty he had taken in naming him without first obtaining his consent. Above everything the matter must be kept from the Berkeleys. Major Selden would realize this, and excuse him.

The Major was seated in the little porch of his cottage, his chair tilted back and his feet on the banister — having just returned from the post-office near the Spring; and with his papers on a table beside him under a book to keep them from blowing away, he was unfolding the *Richmond Whig* when Douglas ran up the flight of steps leading to the President’s cottage.

“Bless me! By the powers, it’s Newton! I haven’t seen you since you went abroad. Come up! I’m delighted to see you. When did you arrive?”

“I’m afraid, Major, your greeting would be less cordial if you knew my errand. It is of a delicate nature. May we go within? I have just had a quarrel with Mr. Blake — and he has challenged me to fight him. I ventured to name you as my second —” and he proceeded without replying to the questions, and under seal of strict confidence to relate the whole story, from Andy’s discovery to the present moment.

Major Selden was a man of the old school. He had been second in several duels and principal in more than one. He believed in a man’s right — nay, obligation — to settle aspersions upon his honour in this way, and the right rose to the dignity of a sacred privilege if the sword left its scabbard in defence of innocent and beautiful womanhood. Like an old war-horse, he thrilled in the prospect of battle. He said with emphasis: “You were right to provoke the challenge, right to accept it. You make me your debtor by confiding your honour to my care.”

“I appreciate the fact that my story could be revealed to no one less devoted to Dr. Berkeley than yourself.”

“Right, right, my boy! I think it would kill Mary Berkeley if her girl’s name should be included in any such story — bandied about

from one newsmonger to another. The pretty child would perish like a butterfly in a flame. *Now*, our first thought must be of them — and the sooner we get this over, the better. The other party has lost the privilege of naming place, hour, and weapons. I never travel without my pistols, — I have a fine pair, — and I see no reason why we should not arrange a meeting for tomorrow. The hour had better be not long before the morning train leaves for Washington. We are lawbreakers already, and should Blake fall we would have to get you out of the state in short order. What sort of a shot are you ?”

“I can cut saw-teeth around a visiting card at ten paces,” said Douglas, “but I desire no advantage. Mr. Blake is, I hope, competent, or he would not have suggested pistols.”

A step on the gravel arrested their attention, and through the open door they perceived the face of Tom Burns, pale with suppressed excitement. “I come from Mr. Blake, gentlemen, I — I — he represented to me that he had no friends in this place and I could not refuse him. I bear his challenge to Mr. Douglas Newton.”

“I suppose,” said Major Selden, stiffly, “you have been made aware of the occasion of the duel ?”

"I have not," said poor Tom, with an expression of abject misery. "My principal instructs me to say that no negotiation except as to place and weapons is necessary, — he will consider none. But he asks the privilege of time to-day to arrange his affairs — as he is from New York and also has an engagement to ride with a young lady early this afternoon."

The Major restrained Douglas with a meaning glance, and replied: "His request is granted. The time will be to-morrow, half an hour sharp before the departure of the morning train to Washington; the place will be the little level beyond the Lover's Leap — quite hidden by trees from the buildings here; the weapons, pistols — one of a pair I have with me."

Tom bowed and withdrew. "You see, Douglas," said the Major, "we are in luck. That young fellow knows nothing. The spot I select has been used before for a similar purpose, and the pistol shots, if heard at all, awakened no inquiry."

The Major was so much exhilarated by the incident that he launched into a train of vivid reminiscences of Virginia duels in which he had taken part, and of which he had heard. "It is the best remedy for an injury," he said, "and the only one! I am thankful to say I never

had any part in a fight which proved fatal to either principal. I winged my man once — slightly — and never had a night's sleep until he recovered. You know Jim Barksdale? That's the old fellow — old now, but not then, and the best friend I have."

"Should not the ride this afternoon be prevented?" interrupted Douglas, gloomily.

"How do you know it is to be with Miss Berkeley? Perhaps he will ride with Miss Kitty Burns. They are sometimes together. Don't worry about that. I'll see to it. Shirley shall not ride with Mr. Blake to-day, if I have to break her neck to prevent it. But as I was saying, we have had no duel comparable in interest to one my father remembers. I was a boy at the time, and never shall forget the excitement caused by it."

"Hamilton and Aaron Burr, of course," said Douglas, wishing to help along a story that promised to require time in the telling.

"No, sir! Not at all! A different affair with altogether a different result. I allude to Henry Clay's duel with John Randolph. Of course, you've read *Tom Jones*! In one of Mr. Randolph's outbursts in the Senate he called the Union of the President and Henry

Clay 'the coalition of Blifil and Black George; the combination of the Puritan and the blackleg.' According to the ruling sentiment at Washington there was but one result which could follow such language as this. Mr. Randolph and Mr. Clay must exchange shots, and so they did; Mr. Clay's ball cutting Mr. Randolph's coat near the hip, and Mr. Randolph's ball burying itself in a stump in the rear of Mr. Clay. On the second round, Randolph received Clay's shot which was happily without effect, and then raising his pistol, fired in the air. 'You owe me a coat, Mr. Clay,' said he, advancing and holding out his hand. 'I am glad the debt is no greater,' was the reply, and so the matter ended. Mr. Benton said it was among the 'highest toned' duels that he ever witnessed. But you are not going? Well, everything is being done just *right*. Make yourself perfectly easy."

CHAPTER XVII

WHEN Douglas Newton turned away from Blake in the Lover's Walk, the latter found a seat behind a tree, and proceeded to arrange his plans in accordance with the new turn affairs had taken. He perceived he had been rash in challenging Newton, and cursed his folly. And yet—he would not now be exposed to Dr. Berkeley. Until the fight was over, he would be safe. That was an exhilarating thought. Many things might happen in twenty-four hours. True, he was irrevocably committed, and Newton was, without doubt, awaiting him at Major Selden's rooms. He must find somebody to act for him. No danger of Major Selden's hinting anything to the Berkeleys—he dared not arouse suspicion.

And after all, he reflected, what was it all about? What did Shirley care about him? Ah, he was pretty sure of her! Her coquetry proved it! He had never felt the faintest fear of failure. It was impossible he should fail. Shirley had accepted his gifts of flowers, his

homage, his flattery — and pray why not? Was there one in all her train that could lay so much at her feet? And, by George, she was worth it! She was just the type of American woman the English rave over. Spirited, too, — could thrust as well as parry. But this was no time to linger over the lady's charms. His hour for prompt action had come. A bold step would result in success. Once having given her promise, Shirley would listen to nothing against him. She would become his ally, his powerful ally. She could learn by accident of the impending duel. It would be prevented. He smiled as he imagined her devotion, her spirited defence of him.

He rose with a sigh. He must return to the office, hunt up the registry of arrivals, and find a friend. Coming up the hill, whistling, was Tom Burns. The very man! Boy enough to be proud of the distinction, Kentucky bred, and trained in an atmosphere of chivalrous enthusiasm, — quite man enough for his purpose. Old Selden would see to it there would be no deviation from the Code. The result justified his reasoning, and Tom sped on his errand.

The cars from the North were drawing into the

depot, and thither he repaired for the special box of choice orchids expected that day from Baltimore. Opening the box in the depot, he wrapped them carefully, and took them himself to the isolated little Berkeley cottage near. He wrote on his card an earnest entreaty that Shirley would see him, if but for one moment, and entering the pretty little parlour, he covered the table with the flowers. Shirley had not left the cottage, and immediately appeared looking angelic in her morning dress.

Blake rose as she entered, with a smothered exclamation of gratitude. He at once assumed an air of intense agitation. "Shirley," he said, "I must speak! I must! I have not slept! You were cruelly cold to me last night. I have been in the woods since dawn and I have felt at times that I should lose my reason! No, no, I entreat you to listen! You know my feelings for you — and yet you give me no word! I can bear it no longer! My heart is breaking! Shirley! Oh! How can I say it as I wish? I can do so much for you! You can lead society in London, or Paris, or New York — and come often to your dear old Virginia. Shirley, can you not come with me? May I not serve you as I shall love you all my life?"

But Shirley stood looking at him without blush or tremor. She could not control a faint smile as she marked his careful toilet, his well-groomed appearance, not a bit dishevelled by his agitated walks in the woods at dawn. Her leadership in London and Paris! Was he trying to play the impassioned lover? Was this his idea of making love? Really, he was acting extremely well! Blake's heart bounded as he perceived the quivering moonlight smile, and he essayed to take her in his arms. Drawing aloof from him, she looked him fully and calmly in the face.

"Say no more, Mr. Blake! I do not love you. I never can love you! I shall never consent to marry you! I thank you for these," laying her hand on the flowers, "but I can receive no more, nor any further attentions from you," and with her own graceful little curtsey, excused herself and left him!

Blake stood a moment stunned into silence. "Well, that episode is closed," he reflected. "Now for the other. Damn the women!" clenching his fist. "But there are others! Lots of 'em! I seem to need no poultice for any serious wound! There are brighter eyes elsewhere in my world. No more bread-and-

butter misses for me. No more high-strung proud women. A woman of the world has sense;" and pleading that letters peremptorily demanding replies would occupy him, he shut himself in his own rooms. There Tom Burns found him and made his report.

"Very satisfactory! Thank you, old fellow. Now dismiss me from your mind, and be sure to be in time, sharp, to-morrow morning. No, you needn't call for me! I'll come with Nappy. If two of us drive off together, people may suspect something. Half an hour before the cars leave? All right. — Make it three-quarters at least."

"Nothing has been said about a physician," said Burns. "We forgot that!"

Blake answered with a shrug and grimace: "Leave that to old Selden. The more you give him to do, the better he'll like it — fussy old party."

"I was thinking I'd ask Dr. Berkeley."

"Unthink it, then. Not a word! Not a breath to living soul or we might be interrupted. Anything but that! Of course, I've business letters to write and shall not appear again to-day. Don't you go moping about. Dance and behave as usual."

His second, in a state of profound admiration, left him, and followed his advice. He resolved that so noble an example of manly courage and honourable sentiment should never be lost. As to Douglas, the day passed like a dream. From his window he saw Chester and Stanley duly led to the Berkeley cottage — for a countermanding order had been forgotten — and as duly dismissed. The Major has been vigilant, he reflected. He spoke to Mrs. Berkeley during the day, and she excused Shirley. “She hopes to see you to-morrow. To-day she needs rest.” He wrote to his brother Harry at the University and gave the letter to the Major to be delivered in case of disaster to himself. He referred Harry to Major Selden for all explanations, which were to be made also to Dr. Berkeley, and then committing himself and all he loved to the God of his fathers, he slept long and dreamlessly.

The morning sun rose in all its glory, and as the Major, Douglas, and Dr. Caldwell passed through the Lover's Walk, the thrushes and robins poured out their morning song of praise. A carriage was already, by their orders, waiting near the grounds, but out of sight. Tom Burns, in an agony of excitement, was pacing to and fro. The Doctor touched young Newton's

wrist. "Sound as a dollar," he announced, "regular and full."

The fateful hour was at hand, and Burns cast anxious glances around for his principal. The hour came. Blake had not yet appeared. Fifteen minutes more, — no signs of him. Presently a steam whistle announced the coming of the Northern-bound train. Ten minutes more and the whistle signalled its departure.

"We are here on a fool's errand," said Major Selden. "The coward has shirked the fight! Under no circumstances will we now grant it."

"I do not renounce allegiance to Mr. Blake nor disown him utterly until further information," said Tom Burns, in a choking voice. "I am here as his representative, and I now offer to meet Mr. Newton in Mr. Blake's place."

"We have no quarrel with this gentleman," said the Major. "We will now return to our headquarters — and seek some refreshment after our morning's disappointment."

At the hotel it was learned that Mr. Blake had settled his accounts the night before and left in the morning train, leaving no address.

Douglas would gladly have returned at once to Newton Hall. Apart from his interest in Shirley the gay watering-place, in his present

state of mind, held no charm for him. He had come prepared to remain if his presence should be needed, but everything was now definitely settled. Blake was utterly extinguished — “snuffed out,” as Major Selden said. “If he ever shows his face in Virginia, he’ll wish he had never been born. It has been the greatest good luck,” added the Major, “that only you and I knew the cause of the quarrel. I have been in terror lest somebody should suggest it. Nobody seems to have imagined it. You had just come, and an old grudge is supposed to have existed between you. The only thing they *do* know is that a challenge passed between you, and the challenger ran away. Of course young Burns, with all the wish in the world to be prudent, must have unconsciously let some word slip from him, look, gesture — something. Then the hack had driven up and driven away; the driver told all he knew of course. And now here are the warrants from the County Court! We’ll have to go to Lewisburg to obey them. We broke the laws although there was no fight.”

Confronted with the Judge, the only witnesses — the Major, Douglas, Dr. Caldwell, and Burns — declared that they could not incriminate themselves, and therefore could not answer; — and

the Judge, as he had often done before on similar occasions, dismissed the case. "I hope," said Dr. Berkeley, "that Newton comes out of this affair unscathed."

"The result proves it," the Major assured him, "and I think, Charles, I may say that my own participation goes for something. Make yourself easy! Douglas Newton has the highest place in my esteem, my admiration. I am proud to have served him."

"I wonder," said Mrs. Berkeley to Shirley, "if Anne Page had anything to do with that quarrel? Douglas isn't the man to brook any interference with his rights."

"You know as much as I do, Mama; I was not Anne's confidante."

"But you might reasonably expect confidence from Douglas."

"I might — but I did not have it. I feel that I know very little of Douglas Newton."

Something in her tone arrested her mother. "My darling," she said tenderly, "we see too little of each other at this place. All the girls seem so happy, — I hope you are, too. Sometimes I wish I could just look right into that dear little heart of yours! Is it possible you felt an interest in —"

“No, no, Mama darling; I know what you mean. If you look in my heart, you’ll find yourself in every corner of it — and as to my interest in Mr. Blake, I refused him positively, decidedly, the morning before he left. He was very much surprised.”

“And you never told me !”

“You never asked me, you know. Somehow I never like to tell such things. They are so unpleasant. If a girl has to endure them now and then, she needn’t make other people feel badly to hear about them. And I think a man must feel pretty badly, too. I think a girl should always try to avoid hurting the man who has certainly paid her a high compliment, — but if he *will* rush upon his fate, she should do the best she can for him. She ought to keep his secret as carefully as he keeps it himself. That’s all there is about it,” she concluded, kissing her mother fondly, and turning away that she might not betray herself.

The hotel in great excitement had its theories, varying according to the diverse temperaments and experiences of its inmates.

“I wonder if she had given him the mitten ?” said the lady from Kentucky.

“Looks like it,” said General Robertson. “She

might have had a little more consideration. Dancing men are scarce this season. To discard one of them in the middle of August is simply flat burglary."

"I have a presentiment," said the lady, "that this is going to be an unfortunate season. Something more is going to happen before we get away from here. First the old President descends upon us, engrossing everybody's attention, and then these young men absorb everybody! Attention due the young girls is all directed into other channels. But God forbid I should make you men vainer than you are already! You don't think small beer of yourselves! It is occasion for public thanksgiving if one of you gets the mitten. For my own part I did not consider Blake good enough for Shirley Berkeley."

"Nor I," said the General. "What man is good enough for her? What man is good enough for any woman? None that I ever knew. However, the Lord made them to match each other. His will be done! God forbid I should fly in the face of Providence."

"All of which comes well from you — you obstinate, delightful, hopeless old bachelor. But, seriously, you must stand by me, General, and help me. I haven't brought my daughters all

the way from Kentucky to spend White Sulphur time discussing a possible duel. We'd as well have stayed at home where the duels actually come off! As soon as we get our breath after this flurry we must have a Bal Poudré with Spanish dances. I can coach Hazazar. I know the Saraband if he doesn't. Do, pray, keep the crowd in a good humour for a while. We must make some effort — but I have my presentiment!"

CHAPTER XVIII

DOUGLAS NEWTON left the Springs as soon as he was released by the Lewisburg judge. Beyond the casual courtesies of watering-place life and talk, he had held no conversation with Shirley. The duel was, of course, not alluded to. With Dorothea and her little friend, he took one long walk from which Milly was glad to be excused. They explored a neighbouring hillside, gathering, in the most barren places, great stalks of the wonderful mountain primrose, — so opulent, so gorgeous ; as though nature, rioting in riches, had defied every untoward circumstance of sterile soil, drought, what not ; — bringing into perfection scores on scores of great yellow cups, new and glorious every morning, looking as if they had caught the golden sunset glow of the evening. Nothing among the pampered beauties of the most skilled florist could equal these children of desert places. These he had gathered and sent them with his compliments to Mrs. Berkeley — his sole attention to her party.

Douglas was conscious of nothing so much as

a keen desire to return home that he might forward the troublesome task before him. From his soul he thanked God that Shirley had been rescued from the perils that threatened her — perils brought upon her by his own imprudence; but of her possible wound in the matter he knew nothing. His heart was very sore, poor fellow. As Dorothea, in their walk, prattled beside him, he heard little except when she appealed to him in her discussions with little Jack.

“Don’t forget to invite me to your wedding, Newton,” said the Major, as the men clasped hands at parting. “Let me be second sometime when the principal doesn’t run away.”

“May it be soon, my dear Major. But you will be the principal!”

“Well, you see, my boy, Mary Berkeley decided that matter for me twenty-five years ago. She was a very slight slip of a girl to shape with her little hands a man’s life. But that’s just what she did for me. You don’t suppose Shirley would have me, do you?”

“*Quien sabe?*” said Douglas.

The Major held his hand a moment and looked at him thoughtfully. “One thing I do know! There’s no ‘priory attachment,’ as that funny

fellow Sam Weller said, — no lingering regret for the scoundrel who has been following her all summer.”

“How can you know ?” said Douglas. “Can any man know these things ?”

“Because,” said the Major, “*she told me herself*. I asked her, point blank — straight from the shoulder — honour bright. ’Twas a ‘parlous’ thing for a man to do, and there’s many a pretty girl I wouldn’t have believed on oath. But, bless her ! She’s Mary’s daughter, and as clear as crystal. I believe her ! You are not to imagine now I was prospecting for myself. I belong to Mary — Hello ! There’s your train moving — jump on ! God bless you.”

Now as Douglas pondered this wonderful revelation, he reasoned that no gain could come to him through her escape from Blake. Personally it would mean nothing to him. The Judge’s revelation had ended all that. Shirley had given him no sign of interest even. She had treated him with studied coldness. Whatever the future held for him, it was borne upon him that the supreme crown and glory of a man’s life would be denied him. For, of course, *he* would never change ! He would strive, as other men had striven, with no reward for en-

deavour or achievement. Imagination anticipated some day when he and the Major — both old and grey — would meet and compare notes. “And so you would not be warned, my boy !” “No, Major ! We are in the same boat. There has been no other for either of us.”

It was now near the end of August. By October he hoped to finish the irksome transfer of his plantation and personal effects to Harry's adjoining quarters at Cross Roads, which, fortunately, were reached by a private road. Enough provender for Mr. Benson's cattle to last until the next harvests was to be left behind — as well as meat and breadstuffs for] his family. There was yet much to be done. Up to the present moment the neighbours had learned nothing of the new arrangement, nor would Mr. Benson be informed — as the Judge advised — until Douglas had removed his goods from the Beechwood plantation.

The best part of a summer's outing is the homecoming ! Dr. Berkeley carried a thorn in his bosom. Douglas had not withdrawn it by any, the least, cordiality of manner during his brief stay at the Springs. Mrs. Berkeley, always sensitive to the moods of her husband, felt a vague uneasiness ; Dorothea grieved to part from

little Jack, and Shirley's manner evinced effort for the cheerfulness which had been hitherto spontaneous.

But all clouds passed away before the sunshine of the Colonel's welcoming face, with Primrose, the little cart, and Pizarro, — the latter's glittering smile, as Aunt Prissy remarked, "stretching from ear to ear and buttoning in the back" — and Aunt Prissy herself in the big carriage, with Uncle Peter on the box, driving Brandy and Soda! Ah! but it was good to be at home! Never, never would they leave it again!

Dahlias, marigolds, salvia, autumn roses, made glorious the circle in front of the house. Andy, with an overflowing basket, was at the door, old Isham, Hannah, Minerva, Dilsey — all at hand with smiles and greeting. Dorothea's arms were instantly around Flora's neck, much to the surprise of two young Floras and their brother, twisting and turning about in ecstasy at the evident good humour of the company; but slinking away crestfallen as Gabriella, with uplifted tail, rounded the corner of the house. The truce with Flora she respected, but it did not extend to another generation, as the puppies knew but too well.

When Dr. Berkeley looked around his bountiful

supper-table, his eyes kindled. "If you want my opinion," he declared, "I should say Aunt Prissy grows younger and handsomer every day!"

"And if you ask mine," rejoined the old lady, "I should say you all look as if you had been through the wars. It'll take a month of regular hours to make you decent-looking."

"How is everybody?" asked the Doctor, defiant of grammar rules. "Especially Mrs. Ponsonby — poor old dear! How she must have missed me!"

"Mrs. Ponsonby has renewed her youth! She hasn't had a twinge of gout since you left — rode over twice to see me, and was mighty civil to James." And so on, with jest and laughter, until they all separated for various interviews with the servants of the household, the Doctor ordering early hours for his travellers and recommending the same to his Aunt and the Colonel.

The Doctor rose early next morning to make the rounds of stable and garden before he set forth on his professional errands. He found the gardener spading a sunny border for an autumn planting of new Holland bulbs.

"Working before breakfast, Andy? That is not wise. You might send up to Hannah for a cup of coffee."

“Na, na !” said the gardener. “I hae nowt to do wi’ the kitchen stuff. I cook my ain kail-brose and parritch, and Miss Prissy sends me cold meat frae the pantry. I always pit a sprig o’ mint in my parritch ; and when I mak it mysel, ne’er a bit is it burned, — whilk is mair than can be said, I trow, of some ithers.”

The Doctor was on terms of intimacy with the gardener, whom he had rescued, several years before, from the miseries of a wayside tavern, where he lay with a leg broken in a railway accident. The Doctor had set the limb and brought the poor fellow home for treatment. After his recovery, Angus had positively refused to leave ! He was a gardener ! There was the garden, — literally crying aloud for intelligent treatment. He took command at once with the firm hand of authority while on his crutches, and worked with wonderful results after they were no longer needed. He was always eager to talk, and Dr. Berkeley often came to have, as Andy said, “a crack wi’ an honest Scotchman.”

The Doctor now looked thoughtfully at his bent figure. “Why don’t you go to work, Andy, and try to get yourself a wife ?” he said kindly.

“An’ wha says Angus hasna tried, — an’ mair

than ance, — an' the last time will be the last time."

"Come on, Andy, and tell me about it."

"Weel, then, sin' yer Honour is sae kind, I'll e'en tell ye," said the gardener, leaning on his spade. "Ye ken I gang twa Sabba-days in ae month to the Presbyterian Kirk yonder, and hae made bold to sit beside a tidy auld lass, wha kindly reads out o' her hymn-beuk wi' me, — seein' I havena in mine just the forms o' her ain. Weel, on the Sabba-days atween the twa, I hae been walkingower to hae a spell o' godly conversation wi' her at her ain place : an' I hae gi'en her a few peaches, an' kidney-beans, an' new pertaties an' the airy seckle peers frae time to time, as I ken weel yer Honour wadna grudge her. It hae been unco' lanely here, ye ken, this simmer, wi' the creature Isam aye at me for fruit for Miss Prissy's kettles an' the Colonel writin' an' gangin' about wi' ne'er a word for Angus or onybody. I'm thinkin' he's writin' a beuk an' —"

"Yes, yes, Andy; get on with the story of your matrimonial venture. I'm in a little hurry, you see, and don't want to miss it."

"Weel, as I was sayin', ae day the auld lass looked sae dowie an' lanely, I'se up and spier't to her wad she accept a Macgillicuddy tartan,

wi' a bit mannie in it? An' for her mair satisfaction, I tapped my bosom in the region whare a' body kens the loving heart lives an' beats."

"And she refused you!" said the Doctor, striving to keep his countenance. "Well, what of it? Don't despair! Try again."

"Na, na! She said enugh for a' time, I'se warrand. She ups wi' the broom an' skirled for me to 'clear out,' — whate'er that may mean. We hae nae sic language in Scotland."

"And you bowed yourself out accordingly?"

"I hadna time to bow! Ye sud a seen auld Angus speel ower the hedge like a maukin! It's weel ye mendit his brukken leg! Nae time for the gate! — whilk is always tied wi' a rope. She needna hae been sae spunkie! She's a daughter, I trow, o' the first gardener; an' a Macgillicuddy was wi' the Bruce, I can tell 'er. I can gie her a Roland for her Oliver, I'se be bound! Oliver, indeed!" and he began to spade with zeal born of his indignation.

"'Oliver'? Andy! Why, surely —"

"E'en sae — Miss Betty Oliver, they ca' her, and Betty Oliver she may remain for a' Angus!"

"Oh, Andy, Andy! that was a dreadful mistake! I wish I had been here to prevent it."

"I doubt ye couldna! I hae mair sense the

noo. — Hindsight is mair convincin' than foresight when a's told; but how can ye win to it? Ye maun e'en dree yer ain weird an' bide by it, an' sae maun Angus!"

The Doctor's first professional visit after an absence was always to old Mrs. Ponsonby, the *grande dame par excellence* of the neighbourhood.

Mrs. Ponsonby lived in a large old-fashioned house, every brick of which, she was fain to believe, had been brought from England. Had she been thoroughly honest with herself she would have acknowledged that at heart she was still a Tory. She rebelled with all her soul against Mr. Jefferson's Democratic teachings, believed that everybody should know and keep his own place in the social system, be kindly treated therein, but rebuked if he presumed to leave it. Woe be to the unlucky aspirant for genealogical rights to a place in the first families! Should he venture to assume, unwarranted, a *pheon* or *garb* or *mascle* on his seal, the purloined symbol would be promptly challenged by the terribly accurate old lady. Sustained by the sheriff's lists of Thomas Fuller, — which she kept at hand upon her library table, — she would make impossible any future use of them. "Why," she would indignantly exclaim, "should

Americans allow a fraud punishable by English laws as a felony ?”

Withal Mrs. Ponsonby was an agreeable, intelligent, and amiable companion; admired, although somewhat feared by her neighbours. Her conversation with her accustomed visitors was very much on the “Shakespeare and musical glasses” order, never descending to the ordinary gossip of the hour, but she keenly enjoyed it all the same, and rejoiced that she could unbend with Dr. Berkeley and learn as much from him as he could condescend to know himself. However reserved we may be to others, to our physician and our confessor we can wear no disguises, and the Doctor was both to his old patient.

But although Mrs. Ponsonby was reckoned by her own class as somewhat “stiff,” to say the least, she was all kindness to the poor. Her bountiful baskets reached far and near. She never went abroad without filling the pockets of her high-swung chariot with cakes and fruit for the barefoot little boys on the highway. Many of the haughty dames of every age have bristled with repellent manner to their own class and been angels of kindness to the poor and humble. Ah! there lies the subtle wile of the tempter, — “humble.” It is not supposed that

the humble man will ever presume to be an equal ! There is a positive pleasure — let who will deny it — in looking down. “I am not as other men,” for which the Lord is reverently thanked. The well-born man or woman who is “in reduced circumstances,” who “has known better days,” is never at heart “humble,” and therefore theirs is the bitterer lot. Robert Hall reckons that man the truest object of compassion who has known happier days : “for in addition to the pangs of poverty he suffers the stings of an outraged sensibility.” Had this point of view been ever presented to Mrs. Ponsonby she would have considered it, and profited by it, — acted upon it, — for she was sternly upright, and a devout churchwoman. Her position was mainly the result of an inherited respect for law and established order, and for the suitableness and symmetry of the relations of men and things, the one to the other. She was, moreover, a staunch believer in the folly of measuring a meat-axe with a Damascus blade, or of casting one’s pearls before swine. A certain well-bred, benevolent reserve should rule unavoidable intercourse with one’s porcine neighbours. She would have thoroughly understood Sir Hugo Mallinger : “My dear boy, it is good to be unselfish and

generous; but don't carry that too far. It will not do to give yourself to be melted down for the benefit of the tallow trade."

Had our old Dame been less eager to meet her beloved physician, she would have received him on her lounge with her India shawl over her gouty feet. As it was she met him, with the shawl over her shoulders, at the door, and even descended, aided by her cane and her old butler, the steps of the veranda.

"Well, now! I call this absolutely insulting of you," exclaimed the Doctor, as he dismissed "Israel" and gave his arm to his old friend, — "to get well while I am away! I never saw you looking as fine!"

"I wish I could say as much for you, Charles! Why is it that, do what you will, you Berkeleys get as thin as knife-blades?"

"Like our razorback pigs? Because 'it is our nature to' — as the verse goes on to say, 'for God has made us so!'"

"Well, I'm glad to see what there is of you! A mint-julep for the Doctor, Israel! I was about to send out to old Jacob to hitch me up for a drive to the Castle. I was going to be the first to felicitate Shirley. I heard of the handsome young Englishman! Of course you've

learned all about his family ! It will be fine to see Shirley mistress of — ”

“Oh ! Dear me ! Not so fast ! ” And the Doctor proceeded to tell, according to his lights, the story of the duel. Mrs Ponsonby listened with keen interest. “Are you sure it wasn't young Newton's fault ? — you remember, Charles, — ”

“No, no ! Newton behaved well. Harry Selden is guarantee for that. Shirley's name, thank God, did not appear. Blake had paid her too much attention, but she had nothing — of that I feel sure — to do with the affair, — no part whatever. By the bye, Shirley is to spend Christmas at the White House by the President's and Mrs. Taylor's urgent invitation.”

“I would he were a gentleman ! ” sighed the old lady. “Why, why couldn't we have had Winfield Scott ! There's a man for you ! And Mrs. Scott such a high-bred woman. Oh ! these Democrats ! Oh, I know the Whigs elected him, but they are all tarred with the same stick ! ‘Level down, level down,’ — that's their motto. I suppose, after this visit is over, Shirley need not see more of the Taylors. I know what you want to say ! Not a bit of it ! They'll never take on even a thin veneer of polish and breeding.

White House manners will slip off of them like an outer garment, and plain, old Zachary Taylor be his homespun self again."

"Well, shall I tell Shirley she mustn't go?"

"Oh, by no means! Let the child see the 'Republican Court,' and then take her to London next season. She will discriminate — draw her own conclusions — never fear. Trust a Berkeley for that!" And so on, until her visitor was compelled to leave, having had no time to listen to an account of her "symptoms" as developed during the dry season.

CHAPTER XIX

THE home-coming set in motion all the wheels of the busy domestic life of the family; the storing of fruits for the winter, the manufacture into garments of the warm linsey-woolsey and jeans for many servants, which had been woven on the plantation during the summer, the frequent entertainment of welcoming neighbours and friends. The preoccupied expression on the Doctor's face was unnoticed—that was usual; the silence and long walks alone of the Colonel awakened no surprise or comment. Everybody was busy with the duties of the hour. Shirley had been claimed by Anne Page and had gone on a series of short visits. Her friends thought her very "serious for a girl," but wonderfully improved in health and beauty. They were eagerly curious to learn about Douglas's quarrel with Blake, which had become public property by the action of the Lewisburg judge. Shirley, knowing nothing, could not enlighten them.

September ripened into October. There was a new message in the air. Flocks of black-plumaged birds convened for chattering consultation — perhaps for autumnal elections of a leader — on open spaces in the reaped wheat-fields; the old negroes watched the skies for the prophetic flights of wild geese; the long swords in the “martial ranks of corn” rustled with a promise of surrender; new odours were borne on the breeze; the prolonged crescendo and diminuendo of the grasshopper filled the air. The farmer began to investigate the condition of his hunting apparatus, and the dogs to prick up expectant ears. An early frost might, it was true, spoil a few flowers or nip the leaf of a neglected tobacco plant, but it would bring the glories of the autumnal hunting. Any morning now, the Beechwood pack of thirty trained hounds might be expected to start a red fox, and flash across the country with full cry, to be joined by neighbours and dogs, in the first glorious hunt.

With the pine-needles under their feet, crisp with frost, little Pizarro and Flora went every morning for the mails. The boy, duly impressed with the responsibility of his office, and the sacredness of his promise to be led away no more

by a "little squir'l" or any other game, found himself beset cruelly with temptation. One morning, as he trudged along, it seemed to him that every rabbit in the wood saw fit to flash his cotton-tail across his path, and he was kept busy controlling Flora, whose principles were extremely weak on such occasions. Finally Flora stopped short, froze into marble, and stood with stiff, outstretched tail and uplifted forefoot. Before he could think, Pizarro had warned in a low tone, "*Take heed — take heed,*" and Flora quivered with expectation of the final "*Hie on!*" which would permit her to plunge into the bushes and send the partridge aloft on whirring wing. To her amazement, the boy rebuked her angrily.

"Come 'ere d'rectly, you fool! Drap dat tail! *Drap* it, I say! Put down dat foot and come along 'bout yo' business. What de Cunnel gwine say when I tell 'im on you?"

Meanwhile Dr. Berkeley was again on his veranda, walking impatiently to and fro, and sweeping, with his glass, the avenue leading to the main road. "Here he comes at last," he announced, "and not alone! Bless my soul! Why, this is Saladin, and Sandy is leading two other horses."

This brought the family from the breakfast-room to the front. Pizarro approached, big with importance, and announced that Sandy had come with two ponies and asked leave to bring them around the circle to the door. One proved to be a beautiful young mare, bearing a lady's saddle and bridle; the other, a brisk little pony with big eyes and a shaggy mane, saddled and bridled for a child. Sandy surrendered the reins to Pizarro, and with the negro's respectful salutation — pulling his forelock and scraping his foot backward — presented to Dr. Berkeley two letters and a small parcel with his master's compliments. One letter was brief: —

MY DEAR DR. BERKELEY:

After my conversation with you in June, I visited Judge Watkins. As a result of my visit, I have made a gift *in fee simple* of the Beechwood estate to Mr. Benson — and he is now living on the place.

When you receive this, I shall be at sea on my way to California.

With your permission, I send a small souvenir to the ladies and to Dorothea, and am, my dear Doctor,

Respectfully yours,

DOUGLAS NEWTON.

The other letter ran thus: —

MY DEAR COUSIN MARY,

I am sorry I cannot say good-bye in person before I leave for California.

I venture to ask your acceptance of a little brooch once worn by my Mother, — your cousin, — and I send a chain with my love to Miss Prissy. She knew my Mother and can remember her, as I do, wearing this chain.

I have trained a pony — Trixy — for my dear little Dorothea. Do not fear to let her ride him. He is very docile and affectionate.

And I also venture to send a gentle, perfectly kind mare to Miss Shirley. She will not need to stoop to open a gate, — the mare will take it easily and safely. If Miss Shirley will whisper her name Bonnibell (*bonne et belle*) in her ear, she will remember her old master.

With my grateful remembrance always, I am

Your cousin,

DOUGLAS.

This astounding news read aloud was for a moment received in silence. Mrs. Berkeley and Miss Prissy opened the little packages directed to them, and tears filled their eyes as the jewels were revealed. "Dear Fanny! How well I remember her in this pearl brooch," said Mrs. Berkeley.

"Poor child!" said Miss Prissy. "A sweeter

girl never lived than Fanny Bland! I can see her now when Henry gave her this chain — after Douglas was born. Look, James! Here are the dents all along in the filigree, where Douglas cut his teeth on it. Well do I remember how she laughed when Henry scolded her for letting him spoil it. Dear, dear! What does it all mean, Charles?"

The Doctor was deeply distressed, and turned to look for Shirley, — with a meaning look at his Aunt, — but Shirley had fled to her own room. The elders could discuss the matter later, — but not in the presence of the children. Dorothea, dancing with delight, had run in to Isham for lumps of sugar, and with her arm around Trixey's neck, a perfect understanding was reached in a few minutes. She called to the Colonel in ecstasy to look. "He isn't a bit afraid of me, Cousin James. Hasn't he lovely eyes?"

"Poor Primrose," said the Colonel, ruefully.

"No, no!" said Dorothea, "I can have two people to love — Douglas and you, — and two horses, Trixey and Primrose."

"We are second already — not first," moaned the Colonel, with mock distress. But Dorothea was galloping down the avenue with flying curls,

and turning at the gate, was coming in fine style on the home stretch. Sandy looked on in glee, but felt the beautiful mare had not been appreciated.

“Dish yer’s one o’ Diomed’s fillies,” he said proudly, patting her shoulder. “She got sense same as folks. Nobody ain’ train ’er but Marse Douglas, he se’f.” The boy looked away with quivering lip, and the Doctor, too much overcome for words, turned him over to Milly for refreshment and comfort.

Poor Shirley, struggling for self-command in her own room, felt that she was enveloped in a cloud of mystery. She had not understood Douglas during his visit, less at the Springs, least of all now. Why had he sold Beechwood? Why had he gone to California? Last of all, why, why could not she, Shirley, thrust him out from her own heart, her constant thoughts, her prayers. Her prayers? Never! Whether he belonged to Anne or not, she, they, all of us, belonged to God, and to God the sorely tried girl confided herself and him, imploring love, mercy, and protection.

She was ready in an hour to return, serene and comforted, to her family.

“Where is my gallant steed?” she asked.

“Have you given her some breakfast? Saddle her and bring her out, Pizarro.”

With a bright glance at the Colonel, she bent her lips to the mare's ear, “Your master says you must love me — Bonnibell,” she whispered, and instantly, with a soft whinny, the mare knelt to receive her burden. Shirley sped away, bare-head, down the avenue.

“By George!” exclaimed the Doctor, “she has taken the gate like a bird. There she goes up the road! Look! She is back over the gate again.”

“What do you make of it, Charley?” asked the Colonel, — “this extraordinary conduct of Douglas Newton's? I had supposed him singularly free from the *auri sacra fames* of Virgil.”

The poor Doctor shook his head. Nothing could have induced him to betray the secret that burdened his bosom. Others might be at a loss to account for the sudden flight of the young man, — he could understand it. Sensitive, wounded, — unable to meet the eyes of his fellows. It was too sad.

The October Court brought together all the men of the county. Before the Court opened, and during recess, nothing was so much discussed — not even the price of tobacco — as

“young Newton’s sale of Beechwood.” Wingfield, the overseer, found himself important. No oyster in its shell could have been more hopelessly inaccessible than Wingfield to hints, clever leading, downright questioning. Was it true that Mr. Newton no longer owned Beechwood? “True — there was Mr. Benson — ask him.” That experiment, however, was not to be considered. Was it true that both boys would live at the Cross Roads? Ah! that Wingfield himself did not know. He only knew that he was overseer there, and expected to put in a heavy crop next year.

That Douglas should have caught the gold fever surprised every one. True, he had been a traveller — not yet “settled down,” not yet learned, said the older men, that those would “prosper best who pursued the even tenor of plodding industry and professional learning, unaffected by insane schemes of hoarding up masses of the shining ore.”

This wisdom, designed for the young men, fell upon unheeding ears. The *sacra fames* had smitten “mankind from China to Peru.” Midas had touched the sands of the Sierras and bathed in a Western Pactolus. All the nations of the earth had gathered in one little corner of

the globe, to dig the sands and dredge the river. Said a contemporary journalist: "*Punch* itself has allowed Lord Brougham a respite from caricature, and instead of weekly reproductions of his checked breeches and his remarkable nose, brings out prints of the gold diggings with the emigrants that are flocking thereto." At a recent representation of 'Robert le Diable' in a little town in France celebrated for its white wines and its red politics, an apology was made for the absence of the tenor who was to sing 'L'Or est une Chimère!' He had 'gone off to the gold region'! In the remote islands of Oceanica the voice of the missionary was mute. His before-time hearers had listened to the voice of a siren who told of enchanted lands nearer than heaven. All races of men, however divided or differing in physical characteristics, had agreed with the fellow in Béranger's song:—

“ Que dans mes mains pleuve de l'or,
De l'or,
De l'or,
Et j'en fais mon affaire ! ”

CHAPTER XX

As the autumn wore on, Shirley attached herself more and more closely to the Colonel. On fine days they were much in the saddle; for Shirley was nowhere so happy as when borne by the beautiful Bonnibell. She made brief visits to her neighbours, accompanied always by the Colonel, sometimes by Dorothea and Trixey.

On one afternoon, Shirley and her cavalier had found, a long way from home, a road new to them, and she proposed they should explore it. It entered a dense wood, and for many miles no opening or building appeared. A dark cloud came up, and the pretty, sensitive mare crouched at the lightning and thunderclaps. "We must get out of the wood as soon as possible," said the Colonel, as the wind rose and the sky darkened. He took Shirley's bridle and urged the horses to the utmost; but as the tempest roared around them and rain began to descend, prepared to lift her from the saddle and find shelter under the thick undergrowth, — anxiously conscious, however, of the fact that there could be no escape

from the deadly lightning. The next flash revealed a log house just before them, and leaving the horses to follow, the Colonel, in the blinding rain, took Shirley in his arms and rushed to the door, which opened as he pushed against it.

"Come in, come in! How wet you are! Why, surely this is Miss Berkeley and Colonel Jones!"

"And you are Alice Fontaine! How delightful!" exclaimed Shirley.

"Alice Winston now, you know!"

"Yes, yes," said the Colonel. "How fortunate we are to find you and Mr. Winston. He is well, I hope."

"Lewis has gone down to Lynchburg on business, and will not return until to-morrow."

"And you here alone?"

"Not quite! Here is little Viny and Carlo," and a big dog rose from his place on the hearth and came forth, wagging welcome, while "little Viny," a small negro girl, drew forward the two or three chairs the cabin afforded. Meanwhile, the Colonel had gone out, and led the horses under a recently vacated shelter—a rude substitute for a stable made of planks laid over posts. They had stumbled upon the home

of Lewis Winston, who had hidden in Mrs. Fontaine's cedar summer-house last June, while he waited for pretty Alice to dress in her maid's clothes and elope with him. The opposition to the marriage on the part of her parents had been because of his utter poverty; and indignant at the selfishness he had exhibited by tempting their young daughter to share that poverty, her parents had sent her clothing after her, but declined to receive him. Without him she had refused to return. He had proudly withdrawn to the plantation of one of his college friends, and in the forest had built this rude cabin for his bride. It was unplastered, the front room furnished only with a small "cupboard," a table, and a few chairs. Kitchen utensils were on the broad hearth. "Little Viny" kindled a fire in the wide chimney, and Shirley and the Colonel were soon dry and comfortable.

"Now, Viny, we must make some coffee," said the pretty hostess, and the little black produced a coffee-mill, while her mistress measured, in a tin cup, berries which she took from a canister on the rude mantel-shelf. "Lewis says I can make splendid coffee! And I have some biscuits! Lewis says my biscuits are better than Mother's. Can you manage without butter? Viny's

mother lives near, and if it wasn't raining so hard, I might borrow some from her."

She was moving about while she spoke, extracting from the cupboard plates, cups and saucers, and a tiny sugar-bowl. "Perhaps you will miss the cream! Lewis says coffee is better without it — more wholesome and digestible."

Always "Lewis!" The slight girlish figure was gowned in the simplest house dress of dark print, but she was lovely! Shirley's eyes rested upon her with adoration. On a shelf were books — a dozen or more. Among them the Colonel found some old favourites, and he took them down, one by one, his face eloquent with feeling. "Ah, my masters!" he thought, "how you bless the world, from the palace to the cabin!"

"I'm glad you like Lewis's books," said Mistress Alice; "he intends to have a library some day."

She presided over her tea-cups with true hospitality, making no embarrassing allusions to the many deficiencies of her *ménage*. All the talk was bright and cheery — nor was the cheerfulness forced. Mrs. Winston was evidently not only contented — she was a very happy woman.

The storm was passing away, and the thunder growling and grumbling in the distance, but Shirley was reluctant to leave. "I might beg for you all night, if I could make you comfortable," Mrs. Winston said regretfully. "I hate to lose you."

"You cannot lose me! I shall come again — Cousin James and I and little Dorothea. Mama will come, and Aunt Prissy! And then you will have a great many visits to pay at Berkeley Castle."

"Accept this little book as a souvenir of the nice time you have given me. Lewis will be so sorry he missed you," she said as she put a small morocco-bound volume of poems in Shirley's hands.

The Colonel and Shirley galloped home at an extra pace — Primrose and Bonnibell had had no coffee and biscuits. The Colonel was deeply grieved for his young hostess. "What a sad, sad coming down for that exquisite daughter of Major Fontaine's! How could Winston have been so recklessly selfish?"

"She seems happy," Shirley hastened to remind him.

"Ah! Women are such angels! All the more he should have waited. Such poverty —

such small hope for the future ! And she reared in luxury ! Think of her sordid toil, her loneliness when he is absent. Think of next winter in that isolated cabin."

"I envy her more than any one in the world," Shirley surprised him by exclaiming.

"Why, she lives a life of the sternest privation !"

"Ah, but remember ! She is helping him to bear his lot. She is able to make his life—his life of poverty—beautiful ! What would it be without her ? Could she have borne to be fortunate and happy, and he poor and miserable ?"—and the Colonel worshipped her more devoutly than ever.

She was a spirited figure, erect upon her beautiful mare, and she turned an animated face to him as she spoke. The Colonel, however, was deeply concerned for the slight young woman in the cabin.

"I trust Winston has gone to Lynchburg to seek employment there. He has no profession. Surely he must realize what all this means for her ! The Major must send for his daughter and take care of her until her husband can keep her decently."

"She would never go ! Oh, you don't under-

stand, Cousin James! All women are not merely dolls to be dressed and admired, or pretty children to be amused! It is nice to have lovely things, — I know that well, — but the grandest thing in all the world must be to make somebody you love,” — she faltered, and the enraptured Colonel marked the flushed cheek, — “somebody that loves you, supremely happy.”

But there could be no further conversation on these lofty topics. The horses were urged to their utmost speed, for the branches of the trees had showered Shirley so plentifully that her linen habit was thoroughly wetted. When they reached their entrance gate, the Colonel laid a restraining hand on Bonnibell's bridle, — the earth was too soft and slippery for a leap. As they passed through, he called Shirley's attention to fresh wheel-tracks on the avenue. “We shall probably find the house full,” he said, “and you are wet through and through. You must run right in to your own room.”

The Doctor met them with a similar order. “We have Mrs. Dancey and all her children, — blown in by the storm. Don't think of seeing them, Shirley! Get right out of your wet clothes and into your bed. I'll send you a

powder to take, and you are not to appear to-night. I'll send Milly to you."

Shirley, chill and shivering, was not loth to obey. Dried and warmed by the vigorous rubbing of her old nurse, she lay in delicious comfort and reviewed the events, vivified by her imagination, of the afternoon. Her dreams were finally interrupted by the cheery voice of Miss Prissy, followed by the entrance of the lady herself.

"Ah, Shirley! In bed? Are you sick or only shamming?"

"Neither! I am naughty! I went out in the rain and wet my frock. Do you suppose I am to have no supper?"

"By and by, perhaps. — I shouldn't wonder if special prisoner's fare is being prepared for you."

She leaned on the foot-rail of the bed and admired her niece as she lay, with bright eyes and flushed cheeks, among her ruffled pillows, the pure oval of her face framed by the soft frill of a cap under the full crown of which she had gathered her brown hair. Little curllets peeped out here and there, caressing her long, white throat. American women all wore nightcaps until Eugene Sue described the beauty of tress

and ringlet of one of his heroines — was it not Adrienne in the “Mysteries of Paris” ? — due, he declared, to the fact that she had never prisoned them under a cap. Off came the nightcaps of the Western-world women. Their pretty affairs of lace and muslin were cut up to cover pincushions or dress the dolls of their little sisters. I know of one only that survives, as a curious relic of the dark ages.

Shirley, on her part, was struck by the unusual smartness of her Aunt's attire. “Why, you have on your green silk and black lace! You have no idea how nice you look!”

“I have, my dear! I saw myself in the pier-glass — full length. You see I had an ignoble desire to impress Mrs. Dancey. She is here, you know, with all her five children. She goes to-morrow to spend the day with Betty Oliver and have herself fitted. She could very well have gone on this evening, but she means that you and Mary shall tell her the fashions.”

“I ought to get up and help Mama.”

“You daren't! Your father would send you back to bed again. Young Tom is of the party. Dorothea has risen to the occasion. She has brought out her Noah's Ark, her jackstraws, and dominoes for the four children, and chal-

lenged the young man to a game of draughts. It is funny to see how she avoids looking at him. His freckled face and red hair seem comical to her, and she is afraid she will laugh."

"Poor little darling! I wish I could help with Mr. Tom."

"Oh, he will get through the evening. I shall keep the talk away from the neighbourhood gossip — Mrs. Dancey will have that, plenty, at Betty's. I'm delighted you are not to the fore. Why should you let yourself down for her amusement?"

"As well as for you and Mama!"

"Not at all. We can take care of ourselves. I dressed expressly to impress Mrs. Dancey and keep her off Mary. Besides," added the old lady, whimsically, "I'm not above wishing to make a creditable showing for my own sake. I know I am to be discussed in the neighbourhood round of visits she is making, so I brought out my lace and Levantine silk, and my cameo pin and bracelet. I can hear her: 'Mrs. Berkeley is wonderfully well-preserved, but *poor* Miss Prissy!' By the bye, why do we never hear it said of an old maid that she is 'preserved'? Probably 'pickled' would suit us better."

"Oh, Aunt Prissy! How delightful you are,"

Shirley laughed; and her Aunt, having gained a certain point she had in mind, hastened to follow it up. "James tells me you had an adventure this afternoon — explored a labyrinth and found fair Rosamond."

"Oh, yes," said Shirley, eagerly. "Wasn't it romantic? The storm, the hut in the woods, and finding the lovely lady. Her story all through is so charming — reminds one of days of old, and knights and chivalry — doesn't it?"

"Hardly," said Miss Prissy, drily. "I have a great love for the old knights of romance — beautiful, gallant fellows, pricking forth on their caparisoned palfreys; winning everything in war, in tournament, in courts of king and courts of love. I like all their ways —"

"They ran away with fair ladies sometimes," Shirley reminded her; "picked them up at the masque or wherever they found them."

"Yes, indeed," her Aunt assented warmly. "At the masque when the dance was at its maziest, and the mirth at its maddest, a whisper in her ear, a slip out of a low window, a foot on the stirrup, and up he swings her to his pillion, and crosses the border before she is missed."

Shirley nodded radiantly, half rising from her pillow, but subsided again as her Aunt continued:—

“That sounds fine to me! But fancy Sir Galahad hiding in the bushes and bribing the house-dog with a sausage, while fair Imogene or Ermentrude dons linsey-woolsey and slinks through the house with a pail on her head! That’s more like Darby and Joan than knight and ladye.”

“Ah, don’t spoil it!” sighed Shirley.

“Well, I won’t, my dear! Here comes Milly with your supper. And a fine rose on the waiter. That looks like the Colonel’s doing!”

“Marse Jeems was waitin’ for me at the dinin’-room do’. He was cuttin’ the thorns off this little rose with his penknife. He says he’s feared this is the las’ rose befo’ fros’.”

“Well, good-night, Shirley! Take care of her, Milly. I’m off to the post of duty.”

“I has my orders,” said Milly, with dignity. “She’s to take a powder one hour after she eat her supper. I got to keep her awake ontwel she take it.”

“A red, red rose — and the last,” whispered Shirley, as she put it to her lips.

“You better eat yo’ waffles befo’ they git

cole," said Milly. "I ain't bring you nothin' but a partridge and some milk."

"I'm terribly hungry," said Shirley.

"I can't help it! You won't git no mo' to-night. I let you drink all the water you want. What bothers me is I'm feared you'll go to sleep befo' I can give you the powder."

"I *will*, unless you are agreeable. Tell me a good story. Don't stop talking a minute."

"Does you mind the light? I can blow out the candle, well as not. I kin knit Simple Sam's sock jus' as well in the dark. He baig Miss Mary to have his socks knit this winter 'thout no heel — because he say his socks always w'ar out in the heel! You needn't laugh! He did, — an' what's mo', yo' Ma says I must knit 'em straight to humour him. The creeter ain' got much sense, but he know what he wants — that's what your Ma says."

Shirley had no objection to the light, and, having finished her meal, and coveting nothing so much as an uninterrupted hour for her own fancies, urged Milly to begin her story. "What about Mrs. Dancey?" she asked, by way of an entering wedge.

"Brer Silas say they been 'tending a big, distracted meetin' at Simpson's Grove, close by

Mrs. Dancey's husband's sister-in-law — she that was Patsy Perkins. Is you listenin', Miss Shirley?"

"Certainly, — 'attending a protracted meetin', — that is very interesting. Never mind about Patsy Perkins."

"Brer Silas say 'twas the po'est meetin' he ever 'tended. The preachin' was fyarly good, but they couldn't git nobody under conviction of sin. No mo'ners on the mo'ners' bench. Brer Silas, he hope the good seed 'has fell in the groun' an' will spring up some time and bar fruit. Brer Silas is a mighty nice man, even if he *is* kerridge-driver to half-strainers."

"Under conviction?" asked Shirley. "What do you mean by 'under conviction'?"

"Sholy, chile, you can't git religion onless you has conviction. You got to suffer and sorrow and give up befo' you can git converted."

"No, no, Mammy! God loves us as soon as we are born, and nothing can separate us from His love. He commands us to believe that."

"That may do fer you and your Ma, chile, but it won't do fer cullud folks. I know thar's mor'n one path to heaven. We can't all walk together. Thar's prayin', now! Cullud folks speaks right from der hearts to Gawd A'Mighty,

but yo'-all got time to look in the book for the right words to say. I ain' sayin' nothin' erginst the book, — it's all good, — but I got religion mighty different from yo'-all ways."

"Tell me about it — begin at the beginning."

"'Twas fo' you was born. I was a likely young gal about house, an' could dance mighty nigh twel daybreak an' wuk jus' as good next day. We hadn't had a distracted meetin' or camp-meetin' for ever so long, twel at las' one come to Poplar Spring, not fur from here an' near the ole meetin'-house. They built arbours full of benches close to the house, and riz a tent fo' tables. We went over every mornin' with a sight of cooked vittles — chickens briled and fried, roast pig, watermelons, bread and cakes, an' carried a little charcoal furnace to make coffee. Pow'ful preachin' mornin' and after dinner! I never hear such befo' nor sence. It was all about the devil goin' about like a roarin' lion seekin' whom he may devour, an' how we was born the chillern of wrath and sin, and Gawd A'Mighty was angry with us every day — an' we was nothin' but worms of the dus', and even our righteousness was filthy rags; an' how we was walkin' on a narrer naick of lan', and any minnit we was li'ble to fall in the pit that burns

with fire and brimstone, where the smoke of the torment ascends forever and ever, an' whar thar's wailin' an' weepin' an' gnashin' of teeth — an' how Gawd A'Mighty was a consumin fire. 'Peared like the folks, white an' black, got half crazy with fear. The preachers called the mo'ners up, and they sat on the bench under the pulpit and rocked an' cried, an' couldn't be comforted. They was under conviction good an' hard, an' some got religion an' shouted 'glory !'

"Mandy Jane an' me, we sat by the do' an' looked on, but nuvver got under no conviction. One day a terrible stawm came up all of a sudden. The lightnin' an' thunder an' wind was awful. We all run for the meetin'-house an' warn't no sooner in fo' the rain came down like a deluge. It was dark inside, and we could hear the trees crashin' and thunder roarin'. The preachers got up and zorted us to 'flee from the wrath to come,' an' Mandy Jane jump up all on a sudden an' run to the mo'ners' bench. I was feared they'd ketch me, an' I say to myself, I can git in the kerridge out under the shelter an' hide twel it's all over. But when I got to the do', thar stood ole man Jacob Henry, an' he twis' me roun' an' giv' me a push, an' fust thing I know I was

runnin' to the mo'ners' bench an' flop down an' rock an' groan like the res'.

“After a while the stawm passed an' the sun come out, an' all the po' little birds begin to chirp outside. 'Twas the las' day of the 'stracted meetin', an' the beautifullest preacher my eyes ever res' upon riz up to preach the las' sermon. He had a look in his face somethin' like Marse Jeems when he's readin' to you, Miss Shirley, but it was heavenlier. His forehead was white an' high, an' his eyes deep an' dark, an' a sad sort o' smile on his mouth. He certainly was a lovely gentleman! Well, he never speak one word about sin or the devil or hell. He tole us how Gawd had loved us from the beginning of the world and wanted us every one to enjoy good and beautiful things — how goodness an' mercy had followed us all the days of our life and would always follow us if we obeyed and loved Him an' loved one another — an' if we sometimes slipped an' fell an' sinned, He know we were nothin' but dus', and He was ready to forgive us an' take us under His wings like a hen gathers her chickens, an' keep us from doing wrong any mo', — an' then he clasped his han's befo' him an' looked up like he could see heaven through the shingles; an' he tole about the

streets of gole, an' gates of pearl, an' sea of jasper, an' fruits for the healin' of the nations, an' Gawd would wipe all tears from our eyes an' bless us forever an' ever; an' he went up an' up, an' he soared higher an' higher, twel he fyarly briled in glory! An' then he spread his han's out an' prayed for us all, an' dismiss us with the blessin'.

"Well, I felt like I never want to come to yearth an' do another lick of work long as I live, an' I set thar after the people all went out, — an' ole Miss come along an' say, 'What's the matter, Milly?' I bust out cryin' an' I say, 'I don't want to live no longer in this filthy ole worl'.' Ole Miss look at me kind, an' say, 'I've felt that way very often, my girl, but I've found whenever we are disgusted with a dirty world, the best thing we can do is to clean up a little piece of it. Run along now and help straighten up our things an' leave our part of the place here in order.'

"I didn't sleep a wink that night, — I had eat a ungewdly sight of watermelon, — and by day I was up an' walkin' about out doors. I remembered I had sot my Dominicker hen an' 'twas 'bout time she was hatchin', an' sho' enough here she come off her nes' with twelve of the peartest little chickens you ever see. I picked 'em up in

my apron an' car'd 'em to the kitchen an' foun' some, bread an' fed 'em. Thar I set lookin' at 'em eat, an' after a while the ole hen spread out her wings an' call, an' they all gathered under her. All at once I remembered the preacher an' how our Father in Heaven wanted to gather us an' I jump up an' holler 'Glory!' Ole Aunt Venus — she was the cook then — come in. She was a mighty vicious ole ooman, an' she flung my hen out the kitchen, an' took me by my shoulders an' shook me, an' say didn't I have no mo' sense than git religion right thar whar she had to git breakfus? But I was baptized the nex' Sunday an' jined the chu'ch, an' I ain't never unjined. I ain't backslided as I knows of. Mandy Jane an' ever so many of them shouters has backslidden an' gone back to the fleshpots of Egypt, but I hilt on. I don't hold with all the shoutin' an' carryin' on of folks these days. It's easy enough to perfess. Perfessin' ain't always possessin', an' I got no faith in so much talk any way. Folks is too free an' intimate with Gawd A'Mighty to suit me."

Milly had dropped her knitting and sat rocking herself gently to and fro. Presently she came with a sigh back to the duty of the hour and rose to see how her young mistress had been im-

pressed by her recital. Shirley was lying still, her long lashes on her cheek, her cheek resting upon her hand, and loosed from the other hand and near her lips was the red, red rose.

"I wonder how long she been asleep! Here I been talkin'," Milly said with a hint of reproach in her voice. "Now I got to look for Marse Chawles an' fine out whether I mus' wake her for her powder. If she'd tole me she was goin' to sleep, I could have given it to her. 'Tain't good for her to smell that rose all night." She gently withdrew it, and, gathering up her wools and Simple Sam's socks, put it in a glass of water, blew out the candles, and departed, closing the door softly behind her. The Doctor was not found, however, nor the patient wakened.

The next morning soon after the family and guests were seated at breakfast, young Tom Dancey sprang out of his chair like a Jack-in-the-box. Shirley was coming in. Walking around the long table to find her seat beside the Colonel, she shook hands cordially with all the Danceys, great and small, left a butterfly kiss upon her mother's head, and nodded gayly to her father as she passed to her chair. Young Tom would have given everything in his pockets if he could have changed places with the eldest Dancey girl —

who, eyes glued on Shirley, was seated opposite the Colonel. Shirley was radiant, smiling on every one, beautiful in a white muslin gown with the red rose on her bosom. Tenderness and happiness filled the Colonel's heart as he marked the rose — his gift — preserved from fading, and worn on her beautiful bosom.

“Who told you you might get up?” asked her father.

“The pangs of hunger! I was starving.”

“You do my practice credit! Those are wonderful powders! Fine to check a coming cold.”

Mrs. Dancey, who lived across the river, was only an occasional visitor to Berkeley Castle. She was noted as a news-gatherer, not with the least injurious object, but mainly because of the joy of dispensing it again, — an amiable but mischievous trait. Like Rosa Dartle she only “wanted to know” — but unlike Miss Dartle she had no sinister designs. Mrs. Berkeley and Miss Prissy had skilfully avoided personal subjects, and kept the conversation upon domestic matters — how best to green the wonderful sweetmeats of melon rinds, to make them resemble carved emeralds, or gain the golden tint demanded by yellow pickle, — chiefly how the

gowns were fashioned that Mrs. Berkeley had seen at the Springs, and where in the Richmond shops might be found the most elastic make of hoop-skirts. The evening had passed quickly in this harmless talk, but now Mrs. Dancey was about to leave, and half her errand in coming was still unfulfilled. Her time was short. Like a bolt out of a clear sky came the question : —

“What do you make, Doctor, of young Newton's strange behaviour?”

“About his going to California? Nothing seems more natural! I think Mr. Dancey would agree with me that it requires a pretty strong anchor to keep any of us at home.”

“Oh, that's all understood, but there are some strange reports about young Newton. People say —”

“I am sure,” said the Doctor, hastily, “that no one can, with truth, say anything to his disparagement. I have great respect for that young man. He can be trusted to manage his own affairs.”

“Oh, but there's a dark mystery about his sale of Beechwood. Everybody knows that. I saw Jake Peterson at the meetings, and he says most people believe he will never come back. They say Benson found out something perfectly

dreadful about him, and young Newton has given him Beechwood to hush up some disgraceful secret or other."

"I am not acquainted with Mr. Jake Peterson," said the Doctor, coldly, "but if he declares that he knows that to be true — *he lies!* What is more — everybody who believes him is willing to believe a lie." And the Doctor pushed back his chair with emphasis and rose from the table.

"I must excuse myself, and bid you good-morning," he said gravely. "I do not presume to advise you, Madam, nor do I feel sufficiently acquainted with Mr. Dancey to take the liberty of advising his wife, but I think he will tell you that there is a point beyond which calumny behind a man's back had best not venture. Mr. Peterson and those who listen to him might get into trouble. I bid you good-morning." The Doctor bowed himself out, and Shirley, pale and trembling, would have gladly followed him. All the sunshine of her day had gone out in darkness.

Poor Mrs. Dancey's face reddened, but the Colonel immediately essayed to relieve the situation by remarking that it was simply wonderful what fancies would possess some people and lead to reports without foundation. He perceived at once that he made a mistake.

"There's no fancy about it," Mrs. Dancey maintained. "Here the young man suddenly sells a splendid estate for almost nothing or gives it away, some say, *in fee simple*. Why does he do it? I want to know! Oh, you needn't look as if I ought not to mention it before the children. Every man, woman, and child at the meeting heard it, and *most of 'em believed it.*"

"Do you believe it?" said Dorothea, earnestly.

"No-o, — I can't say I do."

"Because if you do, I must —"

"Hush, Dorothea," said her Mother. "It is all right. Everybody in this house, everybody in the country whose opinion is worth anything, loves and honours Douglas Newton."

"Amen," said the Colonel, and the excellent breakfast soon smoothed the lady's ruffled feathers.

The family sped the parting guest with as much courtesy as was possible. She hastened to unburden her indignant spirit to Miss Betty Oliver, with the result that as soon as Miss Betty learned of the Doctor's rebuke, she warmly sustained him, at the risk of losing a customer.

"Now, what are we to do with Charles?" Mrs. Berkeley inquired of the Colonel. "I never

knew him before to run away from danger and leave us to our fate."

"He couldn't trust himself! I saw murder in his eye — and he couldn't fight a woman."

"What do you suppose Dorothea was going to say?"

"I happen to know! She was going to decline further acquaintance with the lady! Going to 'walk majestically out of the room!' Don't be worried, Mary. Douglas will certainly return. Benson is extremely unpopular, and under no circumstances will it be possible for him or anybody else to shake the confidence our best men have in Douglas Newton."

Shirley had silently listened to it all,—and she suffered acutely. She began to wonder how much longer she could endure. The prompt, warm championship of her father and her friend was as music to her ears, but that the tongue of slander was busy with the reputation of the man to whom—God help her—she had given her heart was keen anguish.

The struggle to maintain her light-hearted manner failed at last, and she gradually became more and more silent. She joined the group of knitters around the evening lamp. Does M'me La Paix or her confrères now keep the once

popular *Bal Orné*, — a great ball of wool of many colours irregularly spaced, — with directions for the knitting? Shirley had acquired one of these balls in New York, and now drew it forth.

“Is this a mystery or a harlequin arrangement?” asked the Colonel.

“Harlequin? Not at all! I have the rules here. All I have to do is to follow them, and as I knit, buds and leaves and flowers will grow under my needles. Mystery! Yes — as life is a mystery. The scheme and colours are all arranged for us, and we have only to work by certain rules — work blindly — and hope for the flowers.”

“They will surely come, dear Shirley! Nothing but flowers will ever bloom in your life.”

Shirley shook her head. “There are knitters at work on my life; wiser, I hope, than I. They hold the needles; I can only — wait.”

In due time the invitation to the White House which the President had promised Shirley was received. To her Father's surprise and disappointment, she declined it — very courteously, very warmly and appreciatively, but very firmly. Nothing could shake her.

“Tell *me*, Shirley,” said the Colonel, “tell me confidentially, why do you object to this visit? Washington is delightful at Christmas

and New Year's, and the White House gayeties charming and distingué."

"I don't object in the least," said Shirley; "I know it is grand! I only like something else better. I suppose I must be selfish! It is just this: the White House is all very well and the old President is a dear, — there's an 'understanding' between us, — but to tell the truth, I prefer Berkeley Castle and my Cousin James."

Alas! The poor Colonel now knew himself to be deeply in love with the fair flatterer — and every proof of her preference fed the flame and stimulated his hopes. Indeed he felt assured. Her preference of his society above all others more and more encouraged him. She, poor child, sought him only as a refuge. She could seem to listen many a time when her thoughts were far away. He was the greatest comfort of her life, her best and dearest friend. They were both dreamers. The Colonel's dreams were of her and her only. Shirley also dreamed, but not of him. To her the Colonel meant at no distant day to confide his dream. She already confided hers — to Bonnybell!

CHAPTER XXI

SUPREMEPLY happy, the Colonel began to plan the rehabilitation of his home. Although the owner of a handsome estate, he had very little ready money. Every Virginia planter will understand how that could be. The wonderful success of Nathaniel Hawthorne in the realm of fiction had impressed him, and he resolved to finish a romance he had commenced during the summer, written *pour passer le temps*, but now to be reviewed in the hope of material result. He wished to keep secret, for the present, this new venture. Its success was to be among the delightful surprises of that future day — trembling now, a great rising star, upon the horizon of his dreams.

One day he surprised Mrs. Berkeley by saying that the time had come when he would, really, be compelled to go back to his own plantation. There was an air of unusual decision in the no longer familiar announcement — an unwonted emphasis. “Why, James!” exclaimed Mrs. Berkeley, in amazement. “What is the matter?”

What has happened? You cannot live alone in your house. Think of the chill of a house that has been closed for years. The swallows have built in the chimneys. You could never live there alone. Surely there can be no necessity for you to leave us."

"I know — I know," said the Colonel, much distressed, "but you see, Mary, I have important papers to attend to in connection with my private affairs. I have deferred matters, and my time is short. I must devote many hours, all my hours in fact, to uninterrupted work at my desk. I have some serious thinking to do, and must concentrate my attention. Indeed I — I can have no one about me in the morning hours except perhaps little Pizarro. I will be poor company for you! I really must be much alone. Your women might interrupt me — disarrange my papers, and —"

"Oh, is *that* all?" exclaimed Mrs. Berkeley, in a relieved tone. "My women, indeed! That resolves itself easily, I imagine, into one very little woman. We will soon settle with her. Where's Dorothea? Come here, Dolly. You are not to study or play in the office again for a while. Your Cousin James is going to be busy, very, very busy."

The child was astounded! "Not ever?" she asked.

"Not soon," repeated her mother, gently, but raising a deprecating hand to check the Colonel's protest.

"How near?" entreated the child, the Colonel rising to take refuge in flight.

"Not nearer than the grape arbour." And then turning to the Colonel, she reassured him: "Dolly will obey; you can trust her. And as to Minerva and Dilsey, I dare say you are quite right. Don't you remember, James," she continued cheerfully, "that funny little man — that naturalist — who was here last fall hunting katydids? He came from the Boston Institute, you know — what was his name? — Well, anyway, he told me a mournful tale one day. He had suffered a great misfortune. He had spent a summer at Nantucket, where he had caught a strange fish. He was engaged in classifying its bones, when he was called away a moment — and alas! his landlady entered his room and dusted his table! I can easily understand the importance of quiet and isolation to a student."

The next day an indignant little woman moved herself bag and baggage from the room at the rear of the Colonel's cottage. The move, like

many another house-flitting, was disastrous. Her waxen doll, her dear Victoria, melted in the noonday sun, where it lay forgotten in the confusion. Some of her books were spoiled by an afternoon shower.

But the little Duchess had spirit, and she rose to the occasion. She resolved to hold the fortress permitted her. She was the Scottish Queen on Lock-Leven! She was a victim of injustice and persecution. A revolution had occurred in her dominions, and she was rudely dethroned and cast out. The grape arbour was really a small rustic house over which vines grew thickly. This was her fortress; the small window, a port-hole commanding the Colonel's office and manned with two flashing eyes, whence she shot indignant glances. Pizarro was sleeping on guard on his doorstep, with his book beside him. The banished Queen was no longer to share in the honour of his education.

From her port-hole she soon discovered that the Colonel was already occupied at his desk, surrounded by books and papers; also that a basket of shredded paper was borne away by Pizarro to be burned in the kitchen fire. She concluded that the Colonel was indeed busy, manufacturing something out of paper, — kite-

making perhaps, like the Mr. Dick in David Copperfield, that everybody laughed at, — and that some failures were condemned to be destroyed. Keenly curious as she was, she would not for worlds have condescended to ask a question. The situation was strained between the Colonel and his little Duchess. She decided upon a reserved and dignified course with him.

So passed the first day. In the afternoon, she was astounded when he thrust aside the vines as if nothing had happened. “And here is Her Grace in her sylvan bower! And what did you think of the fine fellow singing all day in the very top of the biggest Lombardy poplar? *There* was a mocking-bird for you. He seems to have forgotten it is high time he was off to the South.”

No, Dorothea had not heeded the mocking-bird. Captive Queens were not supposed to be interested in mocking-birds. Besides — people must be taught that she was not to be trifled with!

But who could resist the charm of his kindness? Not his little friend, surely. Taking her by the hand to lead her indoors before the chill of the evening, he told her the Indian legend of the mocking-bird; how a lovely song, sweeter

than anything ever sung by man or bird, had once been heard in the silence of the night, when the world was young and at peace. A song sweeter even than Chopin's answering voices, — those wonderful voices, — one indignant, defiant, or despairing; the other, the angel voice of hope and resignation. Well, the song was lovelier than these, than anything, and had been lost when men began to fight each other; not lost like "il bel canto" for a hundred years only, but lost forever, unless some high, pure spirit should find it.

"An Indian brave," continued the Colonel, "loved the daughter of a hostile chief and was beloved by her. This was forbidden, and both were cruelly punished. Both died so bravely that the Great Spirit promised to reunite them, provided the lover should find the Lost Song. He was given the form of a bird that he might travel north, south, east, west — listen and learn. Every summer he was to return to the house of the Great Spirit in the Blue Mountains and sing the strains he had learned. Many moons have risen and set, but the bird is still a wanderer. I really thought this morning that fellow in the big poplar had found the Lost Song, he was in such a state of ecstasy." He looked

down at the wistful little face. "You won't mind, dear, sparing me a little while? You'll understand by and by."

And so the child's resentment must needs melt under the sunshine of his charm. She was resolved, however, keenly curious, to ask no questions. Soon afterwards the elements favoured her, and she had no occasion to question. A strip, escaping from the Colonel's table under the window, was caught by the wind, and fluttered up to the entrance of the grape arbour. On it was written:—

"Gwenlian awed him by the majesty of her pure maiden eye. He cowered beneath it. Just then Harold Tudor rushed —"

All was explained! The Colonel was writing a story! Dorothea read with starting eye-balls! She resolved to keep the tremendous secret as long as she could. Finally, weakening under her burden, she confided it to Shirley, the first moment she could find her sister alone after her return.

"Oh, Dorothea!" she exclaimed, "how dare you? Don't you know how dishonourable that was? To think you could read a paper intended to be destroyed! Mama would break her heart if she knew it."

“Oh, Shirley, I told you in confidence. You can't repeat what's told you in confidence.”

“Of course not,” said her sister. “But, Dorothea, you must promise. Yes, yes. I know, dear, you didn't think; but never do it again.”

CHAPTER XXII

A FEW evenings before this unlucky confession, as the family sat on the moon-lit veranda, the Colonel had led up in a rather roundabout way, to the subject of story-making and novel-writing in general. Presently he said: "It is difficult, I imagine, to begin a story. Just where the curtain is to rise, you know."

"Perhaps," said Miss Prissy, "that's the reason some writers don't begin at all! They lug in an outsider or two, and make some one of them tell the story. The rest of us are kept cooling our heels on the outside to suit their convenience."

"I know it," said the Doctor, "and I consider it a mean advantage to take of a reader. Here you are, politely listening to the remarks of Captain Chutterbuck and the Rev. Dryasdust, expecting something fine from those gentlemen after a while — when lo and behold, they bow themselves out, leaving a manuscript which contains the story. I resent such treatment! To keep a man standing at the door of an

enchanted palace until these heavy fellows have a hearing! It's a nuisance."

"Well," said the Colonel, reflectively, "in this world, it is never what is done, but who does it that makes the difference. It is altogether right and proper — nay, admirable — for the Wizard of the North to bar with his wand the door of the Enchanted Palace until his 'Captain' has his say, and I imagine it would be considered little short of a crime in a poor amateur juggler whom nobody knows."

"He is beginning it in earnest," thought Dorothea, and hugged herself in delightful excitement. The Colonel, always dearly loved, was now intensely interesting to her. Was he not writing a novel? Were not all of them to be described in it? Nothing was more probable. His lightest words became significant, and, indeed, he often drifted into suggestive talks as he smoked with her father on the veranda. Watching for these, she knew no weariness. Her one dread was lest she might be sent off to bed, and so miss some revelation.

"What have you, Charles," asked the Colonel one evening, "on nautical subjects? I have been ransacking the library."

"Nautical?" queried the Doctor. "That is a

wide word. Is it ships, seamen, navigators, or what?"

"Currents," replied the Colonel, "ocean currents; and probabilities of storm, in certain latitudes."

"Dear me!" thought Dorothea. "Has he taken Gwenlian to sea? Oh, if he should drown her! If her ship should be captured by pirates, and she walk the plank like Theodosia Burr!"

At another time he consulted the Doctor upon the action of poisons—what poisons were deadly, and the length of time before death ensued from certain poisons.

"Now he has done it!" thought Dorothea. "He is murdering that sweet Gwenlian—maybe Harold Tudor, too! They are in the hands of the pirates, and are suffering torture from slow poisoning." That night she slept tremblingly with all the covering over her head.

The family had gathered one evening in the early autumn around a fire in "the study," now used as a sitting room. The Colonel had been silent and *distract*. Suddenly he said: "After all, the hardest thing, I fancy, is to finish a novel. Imagine a writer with forty people, more or less, to dispose of. Some of them villains who can, on no account, be left

on earth, — a perpetual menace to the happiness of a lovely heroine. Writing of civilized times has this disadvantage; you cannot massacre a whole community — stab, scalp, burn, or behead everybody. Life is safe and polite — the times tolerant to the green bay tree. What's to be done with the villains?"

"Let them live and prosper!" said the Doctor. "The dupe, not the villain, suffers in real life. The dupe, honest fellow, blunders along and falls into the pit at last. The villain is clever and gets off scot free. Now in Sir Walter's novels there is a systematic plan. Through one half of the book the ingenuous hero blunders, the wily villain triumphs, the pretty heroine despairs. Turn the page about the middle, and presto! All the tangles begin to straighten themselves out; the villain comes to grief, and the heroine is brought to a beautiful burial, or in satins and laces, to her wedding day."

"That is just what I like," said Miss Prissy. "I do love to have things rounded up neatly and comfortably. I should not mind knowing how many raisins are in the wedding cake."

"This fellow Dickens," said the Colonel, "always rings down his curtain on a tableau. Everybody has come at just the right time from

the ends of the earth. All are standing in the wings awaiting their respective cues. In they pop, one by one, the curtain falls on the villain lying confounded and writhing on the floor, and all the others appropriately posed, uttering moral sentiments and behaving with becoming virtue and discretion. All this leaves the reader in a pleasant state of mind. This new man you are all so fond of — it appears his name is not really 'Titmarsh,' but something 'Thackeray' — is quite satisfied that his disreputable Becky should live long, and, in a measure, prosper. However, he doesn't signify."

"Shirley," whispered Dorothea that night after the lights were out, "*he's finishing it.*"

"Oh, Dorothea," she said sorrowfully, "can't I make you understand, dear? Listen! You have no right to read anything not intended for you — that is, any letter or note. And if by accident you do read it, never speak of it. Try to forget it."

But Dorothea had no wish to forget anything so thrilling. The novel was her only excitement. Children quickly perceive a chill in the atmosphere of home. Things had changed lately for her. Her father was silent and troubled — and her mother looked anxious. As

to Shirley! Shirley was changed altogether. And her Cousin James! She saw him only at rare intervals. He was either in his office or on horseback with Shirley, or off for a day at Catesby. She confided to Gabriella that her world was sadly out of joint — that for her part she wished there were no such things as authors among home-people. They took up everybody's time, made everybody nervous, and were a long time finishing up their old books so things would be comfortable and pleasant again. Gabriella, never known to contradict, loudly purred assent, and to the best of her limited ability, soothed and comforted her mistress.

There came at last an eventful evening. The family talk had been of names — the queer changes in Virginian names, etc. The Colonel said that his mother's ancestry had been Welsh. He thought the names of her people in ancient times very beautiful — Gwyril, Gladwys, Gwendolin, Gwenlian.

“And the men?” asked Mrs. Berkeley, always sympathetic and adaptable.

Dorothea, who had looked up at the first name, blurted out explosively, “*Harold Tudor.*”

The Colonel looked surprised. Dorothea ran

to him and put her arms around his neck. "I tried to forget it, Cousin James, — Shirley said I must, — but I couldn't. Shirley said it was *dreadfully* wrong for me to read a paper when I found one; — but you see I *had* read 'Harold Tudor'! I asked Mammy about it, and she said she understood how I couldn't help it."

"It doesn't matter in the least," the Colonel assured her. "Of course, I am quite willing you should all know, although I had planned to surprise you later. Yes, the name occurs in a novel I have written. I commenced it last summer, and it is almost ready for the publisher. I think well of it, very well, indeed. It was finished from a sudden impulse, but a high motive; and, really, I think it was an inspiration."

"Well, well!" said Miss Prissy, who had been too much astonished to speak. "Will wonders never cease? To think, after trying the navy, law, politics, and farming, James should have burst into the literary world!"

"I didn't, dear Miss Prissy," laughed the Colonel; "I am crawling in on my hands and knees. I have been thinking out my story for the last year, and have nearly completed it."

But Dorothea's arm was around his neck, and she whispered, "Are we in it, Cousin James?"

“Oh, I mustn't tell you the story! ‘In it’? I should like to know how you were to be kept out of it! Of course you are in it, but not in this prosaic age. The Dissenters and Quakers have left us nothing picturesque in this day and generation — unless, indeed, it be their ‘personal devil.’ Look at Mary, now, in her grey gown! You will find her in my book as she should be — in a rich brocade over a satin quilt, high-heeled slippers and diamond buckles, her hair piled high and finished with flowers and feathers.”

Everybody laughed at this picture, but Dorothea in her heart resented it. Could anything be lovelier than her mother, she thought, when she stood in the family pew at old St. Martin's, her fur-edged pelisse fastened with tiny barrel clasps, her sweet face far back in the great bonnet, like a picture in a shadow-box?

“Who could write a story with the setting of these prosaic times?” repeated the Colonel. “No dancing, no merry-making, no horse-racing, no reading the romantic literature of fifty or a hundred years ago, no —”

“No drinking, no rioting, no oaths and swearing among ladies! No tipsy clergymen leading

our young men astray, no fights on the court green, no broken heads for Charles to mend on every court day!" said Miss Prissy, with more heat than she usually exhibited.

The Colonel raised a deprecating hand. "I surrender," he laughed. "I call the company to witness — '*picturesque*' was the word I used. Nothing more, nothing worse than '*picturesque*.'" But Mrs. Berkeley had rallied to her Aunt. "Think of the dear Quakers, the good Presbyterians!" she began indignantly.

"Their Sunday dinners are very indigestible, Mary," interrupted her husband.

"Oh, Charles, how can you! Our Bishop sets his face like a flint against the old-time drinking and rioting. Doesn't he teach us to live godly, soberly, and righteously in this present world? To think only of things lovely, pure, and of good report? As to James's romantic literature, how can he read it and 'think only of those things'?" Turning to the centre table, she took up "The Keepsake," in its sumptuous binding of cream and gold. "I like the new things better," she declared. "Read these poems by those young brothers, Charles and Alfred Tennyson. There is delicacy and refined fancy for you, — without a bit of the Puritanic element

you are always deprecating — though why I can't imagine!"

This was too much. Only lately had gods walked the earth — gods who had not yet known — who never will know — "twilight." Were they to be supplanted by these youngsters? The Colonel looked so shocked at the total depravity of her taste that the Doctor brought back the discussion of his book. Had he signed his own name?

"Why, certainly, Charley. Why not? I have reason to be proud of it. I have made a dedication, — of course, not mentioning names, — but indicating you and Mary, so your friends will understand."

The Doctor, evidently a little nervous, ventured another question.

"Oh, as to that," said the Colonel, "it is not a short story. It is longer than 'American Notes,' — that medley of *bizzarries*. Heavens! What has old Virginia not suffered from these itinerant foreigners! Mrs. Trollope, Miss Martineau, and now this underbred, ungrateful Dickens. It is one of the trials of my life to see how greedily people are reading him."

"They all came over and saw us as we are," said the Doctor.

“Not a bit of it,” retorted the Colonel. “No man can describe the inside of a house, having seen only the outside. Why, that fellow Thackeray ridiculed our women, sir! He caricatured the Virginia lady, sir!”

“The Virginians” had not then been written, nor the sacrilegious hand, which “caricatured the Virginia lady” through Mrs. Mountain and simpering Fanny, been laid also upon our peerless Washington.

“Was that the reason you wrote the book, James?” asked Mrs. Berkeley, anxious to conciliate after the little flurry.

“Why, — no, Mary! I really desired more than anything to pay a grateful compliment to you and Charley. You have made my visit to you most delightful. I have never realized that it *is* only a visit. I am afraid you will have to set the dogs on me some day,” he added merrily.

“Never!” exclaimed everybody at once. Mrs. Berkeley laid a reproachful hand on his sleeve. He raised the white hand to his lips respectfully, and after an embarrassed pause, rose and walked back and forth, strangely agitated. “I wish I could tell the whole truth!” he said. “No, it was not altogether for that. When I found an

obstacle — money, *mere money* — in the way of some things very near my heart which I wished to do for the happiness of — others, I had a great longing to — to — in short, I can hardly explain! Some day you will all know! Those fellows at my place are pretty unfortunate farmers. The tobacco just pays for the pleasure of raising it — hardly that. Last year a little survived the rains and the cutworm, and the burning of two or three tobacco houses. When it reached the market in Richmond, there was no market for it. However,” he continued, “I don’t mean to be a vagabond any longer! I intend to settle on some profession, — every man should, — and I have decided upon literature. Nobody is more independent than an author. His brain is his bank — a bank that will honour every draft. We have outlived the days of Milton when a noble poem was sold for a song. Think of Hawthorne! Think of that fellow Dickens, reaping a golden harvest in this country.”

“And you say you signed it? Did you sign your full name or only initials?” asked Mrs. Berkeley.

“Assuredly, — and my full name, — only I signed J. Maddock Jones. My dear Mother,

you know, was a Maddock. Her name will be recognized in England and Wales, and perhaps help the book abroad. She was descended in direct line from Madoc Ap Rhys. You may remember he married Lady Gladwys, daughter of a Prince of Powys — ancestors of the Tudors of the British throne. The line goes back straight and clear, to the great ancient kings of South Wales.”

“But, James,” exclaimed Miss Prissy, putting down her knitting, “you amaze me! Who is always condemning Virginia pride in ancestry? Who says we degrade it when we boast of it? I never saw such topsy-turvy times as these! A body doesn’t know what to expect next.”

“Why, of course, Miss Prissy, I am not doing this solely for myself! The Maddock family has fallen into obscurity. They need my fame and are entitled to share it. It is a good old family, and lately I have felt a strong desire to reestablish it.”

“What a fellow!” said the Doctor afterwards, to his wife; “to think he should seize this opportunity to honour his mother. Everybody knows what a time the Catesby Joneses made when his father married her. One thing astounds’ me — James Jones doing anything to make money!”

“I wonder if he will succeed! What do you think?”

“James has travelled and read much. Dear fellow! He is full of sentiment — and poetry, and all that. But, bless his innocence! He has never learned any worldly wisdom. Pizarro is to-day more a man of the world. I wouldn't be surprised if he makes a hit. Nothing surprises me these days.”

CHAPTER XXIII

DOUGLAS NEWTON had now been absent six months, and nothing had been heard from him. Fifty days were allowed for the journey from New York to San Francisco *via* Panama, but letters had been expected from Chagres, the Panama "halfway house," the last of November. Failing this, certain information of the "forty-niners" might be looked for at Christmas. The season passed anxiously for Wingfield, and for Harry Newton, who spent Christmas sadly at the University. In March, six months after Douglas left, the Doctor received a letter from Harry : —

DEAR DOCTOR :

I have heard nothing whatever from Douglas. I must go and look for him, unless indeed you may have heard. As you are his oldest friend, I take comfort in the hope he may have written to you. The first letter I wrote to him I begged for his address. The letter has been returned to me, "not found."

Faithfully yours,

HARRY NEWTON,

“Before you answer, Charles,” said the Colonel, “let me ride over to Dr. Page’s. It is altogether probable Douglas has written to Miss Anne. Harry naturally might feel reluctant to question her.” The Doctor agreed with the Colonel, and he set forth at once on his delicate errand.

He found Anne at home and quite willing to grant her visitor a private talk of a few minutes. The Colonel, with delicacy, circumlocution, and much embarrassment, approached the subject, and said he supposed — everybody was uneasy — he supposed Miss Anne —

“Why, I’m crazy about it,” the little lady exclaimed. “If anything happens to Douglas Newton, I don’t know what I shall do. I am devoted to him.”

The Colonel’s heart melted within him. With a meaning look he said, “Say no more, my dear young lady! Rest assured you have my tender sympathy. It would mean more to you than to anybody should anything — which God forbid — befall Douglas Newton.”

Anne opened wide eyes. “Why, Colonel Jones, you don’t think Douglas is in love with me, do you? You don’t suppose I care for him if he *isn’t*?”

"I thought — we all thought —" stammered the poor Colonel.

"Nonsense!" said Anne, impatiently. "Douglas is dying for Shirley Berkeley. I mean it — *dying!* He told me so himself, when he bade me good-bye! He said life was worth nothing to him — *nothing*; that he was too poor ever to hope for her. She was never to know it. He said more — but I promised. Oh, why did you make me break my promise?" — and the excited girl burst into tears. "And Douglas is so splendid! And Shirley *ought* to care! She ought to be *made* to. I don't see how she can be so cruel. And Douglas told me — but I promised! And everything is so dreadful! Douglas hasn't written to Harry, and I know he isn't alive. He has been mur — murdered by those awful Mexican robbers," and the poor child sobbed convulsively.

She was a pathetic little figure as she sat with her head bowed on her arms at the table. The Colonel rose and looked down upon her, — too much surprised and troubled for words. He did not wish to wait until she should think it necessary to lift her tear-stained face. He was possessed with a conviction that she loved Douglas, in spite of her protesting to the con-

trary, but that Douglas should have declared his devotion to Shirley was an astounding revelation. For the moment it overwhelmed him.

Stooping over the prostrate little figure, he begged her forgiveness for the pain he had caused her.

"Why, you haven't done a thing, Colonel," said Anne, suddenly looking up, and shaking her head as a flower might shake off raindrops. "It is I who should beg pardon — crying here like a great baby," and she laughed hysterically. "You won't tell anybody about Douglas? Thank you — I knew you wouldn't. You aren't going right away? Come again soon! We may have news before long after all. Remember, now! You aren't to tell about Shirley. I promised Douglas on my sacred word and honour — and you just *made* me tell you."

In her room, she clenched her small fist at the face in the mirror before her. "Well, you *have* distinguished yourself! A pretty shaky reed *you* are for anybody to lean upon! I'm ashamed of you."

A troubled Colonel was speeding home to Berkeley Castle. Douglas! Could it be possible that Shirley — *of course* not! Away with

such absurd suggestions. Nobody knew Shirley as he did, — but poor, poor Douglas !

The sun had set when he reached home, and the evening lights were burning in the house. With a hasty word “no news” to the Doctor, the Colonel excused himself from supper and repaired to his room in the office. He sat long in the darkness — long after the house lights were extinguished. Before he could sleep, he had marshalled before him all the smiles, kind words, the seeking of interviews, of drives, with which Shirley had so honoured him since her coming home in September, and he had resolved that soon — very soon — he would tell her all, — and then !

But of one thing we poor, half-blind mortals may be sure. If doubt — the serpent — enters the bosom, he has come to abide. He makes no brief visits. He may creep back into the hole into which we indignantly thrust him, but he will know his own hour for raising his ugly head. And good luck will it be if he comes out alone. A brood of active little kindred doubts are pretty apt to accompany him.

The early April evenings in the South are already balmy, soft, and delightful. The air is laden with vernal odours, from fragrant leaf

buds of the lilac, from hyacinths and tulips, and many flowering trees. Soft, sleepy murmurings of birds and insects contend unequally with the voices of the frogs in the grass and around the streams. Every breath, every sound speaks of hope and love and promise. On such an evening, Shirley stood in the veranda overlooking the garden, with an arm clasped around the pillar on which she leaned her head. The family had been talking of matters and things in general — of recent political movements, of the Colonel's great book, which he had announced as almost ready to be sent to a New York publisher.

He had brought home from the Northern mail a number of magazines and papers, among them *The Evening Mirror*. There was an American genius in those days who flashed forth like a meteor out of a dark cloud. Presently the meteor became a fixed star, burning with such splendour that men forgot the cloud. Around the astral lamp that evening, the family gathered to hear the Colonel read aloud a choice selection from this author. He was extremely nice in his pronunciation, but his "r's," always elusive as terminals, escaped him altogether in his appreciative rendering of a famous poem of this genius :—

“By that Heaven that bends above us — by that God we
both adoah,
Tell this heart, with sorrow laden, if within that distant
Aiden
It shall clahsp a sainted maiden whom the angels call
Lenoah, —
Clahsp a rah and radiant maiden whom the angels call
Lenoah.
Quoth the Raven, ‘Nevahmoah.’”

The Colonel's pride in the author was tempered with surprise. “Think of that fantastic fellow!” he exclaimed. “Why, when we were at the University together, he seemed destitute of the instincts of moral principle. I always understood he was expelled. He was an inspired ingrate! What old John Allan endured from him beggars description. Now he has distanced us all!”

“We must forget his early errors,” said Mrs. Berkeley. “When the pond-lily blooms, nobody remembers its slimy bed. Nobody should remember.”

“Ah, Mary!” said the Doctor, “you can't expect us to accept any such sophistry. The cases are not analogous. Your lily is not responsible for its birth; yet its first act is to grope upwards through the darkness. It never rests until it

reaches the light, and at the first smile of the sun opens all its golden heart. Imagine your lily born in the light and choosing the slimy bed for its portion !”

But the Colonel was full of enthusiasm. “No use in reading anything after that !” he declared — and the family circle resolved itself into the usual committee for desultory discussion upon any subject that presented itself. Shirley had seemed to listen — but at the first pause had risen and gone out. The Colonel made haste to follow and found her alone, in an attitude than which his imagination could conceive of nothing more beautiful, more appealing.

“I don’t think, Shirley, you told me your own idea of a good novel, when we were all discussing my book.”

“I, Cousin James !” — she paused and sighed — “I think the world needs a book to help us bear our lives.”

“*Shirley!*” The poor Colonel’s heart was as wax within him. “Shirley, are you troubled? Is *your* life hard to bear? Tell me !”

He felt that his great hour had come! He stood beside her drooping figure as she leaned against the pillar and longed to fold her in his arms. “Tell *me*, dear Shirley !” She turned

and confronted him, and as the light fell full upon her, he was shocked at her indignant, tear-stained face. "Hard to bear? I can bear no more! My heart will break! How can you — every one of you — talk about politics and gossip and books, and smile and be happy when *Douglas — Douglas —*" and she broke down, and with a passionate sob left him standing, paralyzed with surprise, slain with despair.

In the darkness and silence of his own room he met his fate squarely and grappled with it. For the moment, it would seem that all was over. Her passionate face, her heart-broken tones, had told more than her words. And yet — how *could* it be? She had seen so little of Douglas since his return from abroad — had received nothing — no letters, no gifts — from him. May not this be a schoolgirl's fleeting fancy? She was so young — would she not forget him? And Douglas — who could be sure of the constancy of an untried boy? Evidently he was content to be absent. These were the insistent thoughts — coming again and again as he paced the floor all during the night — coming, to be immediately rejected as unworthy, and stifled at last by one high and final resolve.

The next morning the Colonel calmly an-

nounced to the family : "I have, after thinking about it some time, decided to take a trip southward. I need change and sea air. Yes, Charles," he added, answering the Doctor's questioning look, "the old fever, the old wander-lüst is on me again. Never mind, Dolly ! See what I'll bring you !"

The Colonel was going to California to find Douglas Newton.

CHAPTER XXIV

LESS than eight months before the Colonel sailed had tidings of the Western Eldorado reached the East. Of Chagres on the Panama route, with its cane huts, frenzied crowd of travellers, dirt, scarcity of food, general demoralization, Bayard Taylor has given a vivid description. Those of us who remember him can fancy his pen racing over the page; describing nerve-racking, bone-breaking horrors with the cheerful face with which he seems to have passed through life.

Our Colonel was earlier than Bayard Taylor by two months. From a canoe on the Chagres River he looked out — sometimes scorched with heat, sometimes shaken with crashes of thunder, sometimes drenched with rain “as if the sky had caved in” — upon vegetation and scenery that only a Bayard Taylor could describe. The poor Colonel’s heart was wrung, but his resolve was high. At night, as he lay under the thatch of the canoe on the Chagres River, his thoughts were far away from all the heat, degradation, and discomfort — his shut eyes making pictures

of the dear home; and the half-breed boatman completed the illusion by chanting the negro melody, then popular in Virginia, which he had learned from early voyagers:—

“Oh, Susannah! Don't you cry for me;
I'm off to California with my banjo on my knee!
The gold is waiting for me, a-lying all around;
All I got to do is just to pick it off the ground.”

After a wonderful journey—wonderful and most exhausting—the western coast was reached, and the motley crowd waited for the final struggle for quarters on the *Panama*. She sailed at last through the Golden Gate—“that magnificent portal to the commerce of the Pacific.” A straggling town of tents and canvas houses with here and there a loosely constructed frame-house, strung along paths of dust and dirt, was the San Francisco of that day;—destined to become in two short months more a large city full of people—“Yankees, Californians in sarapes and sombreros, Chilians, Sonorians, Kanakas from Hawaii, Chinese with long tails, Malays, negroes, and others in whose embrowned and bearded visages it was impossible to recognize any special nationality.”

The Colonel, like all newcomers, was overtaken

with a sense of utter bewilderment. Leaving his luggage that he might look for a porter, he was informed that no man filled that office; he must carry his own trunk! As this would be inconvenient while he searched the town for lodgings, he left it on the wharf. Several ordinary frame-houses bore the proud names of "Parker House," "City Hotel," "Tremont Family Hotel." Gamblers, he was told, filled the entire upper stories of these houses, besides their own great canvas tent, the "El Dorada." There were no decent rooms to be had anywhere. Every corner was filled — every bed; and all the cracks and crevices, the floors, beds, and blankets swarmed with fleas! The Colonel thought a cellar room might be less popular and therefore cheaper, but he was told there was but one for rent. Cellars under the earth were considered desirable, and this one solitary, untenanted chamber would cost him \$250 a month! He finally returned to the "Harbour House" — nearest the wharf of any, and therefore near the trunk! This he shouldered for himself and conveyed with his blanket and bag to a small domicile under the rafters, for which he was to pay without meals \$20 a week — with meals \$45 "and upward."

The streets were filled all day with eager arrivals : gold-seekers ; venders of every conceivable utensil required by diggers ; wildly exultant men fresh from "the diggings" with solid lumps of gold to display ; defeated, enfeebled men, broken in fortune and health, going home to die ; gamblers, labourers, women, and children. Many of the latter were seated on the earth, occupied, not in the juvenile evolvment of pies out of dirt, but in digging it up with anything they could command, — old rusty knives, handles of defunct spoons, sticks, — and finding therein minute grains of gold, too small to be handled, but secured by applying the head of a pin moistened with their own saliva ! These children sometimes collected as much as five dollars' worth of gold-dust in one day.

The Colonel made haste to visit the Alcalde, who happened to be the eminent writer, Edward Bryant. He had been among the early visitors, and was, of course, in San Francisco at the time Douglas was supposed to have arrived. The Alcalde listened with interest and sympathy to the Colonel's story, but shook his head. "There can be no doubt," he said, "that Mr. Newton's letters have been lost. That he is now here is probable — here and successful. Had he failed,

he would have returned home. There is no use in suggesting examination of lists of arrivals in hotel registers. There are no registers. The marking of graves? Graves are not marked. Such is the eager hurry, the excited rush and struggle, that if a man's dead body is seen floating in the river, he is not even looked at. Some passer-by may remark: 'He's a poor man or he wouldn't float. If he had gold about him, he would sink.'"

"Then what must be my first step?" asked the Colonel.

The Alcalde considered. "I regret I have so little power to help you. You might arrange a systematic plan of search and spend a year with no result. You may walk out to-morrow and meet Mr. Newton. I will introduce you to my friend, Dr. Wierzbicki. He has written a fine book on 'California as it is.' He has gone about among all classes of men, and is just the man that may have met Mr. Newton and been attracted to him."

But alas, the versatile and charming Dr. Wierzbicki — although keenly interested — knew nothing. He, however, reassured the Colonel in regard to possible violence at the hands of desperadoes. "A man's rights and claims are respected

here," he said, "although there is no territorial government as yet. The silent consent of all is generally enough to insure to a miner his claim. Improvised judges and juries are appealed to when necessary, and always obeyed, but the miners easily settle their own disputes. There seems to be high character among the newcomers, of whom Mr. Newton was one. There is no violence, no murder, no theft. If a man is called away from a new 'find,' he can stick his pickaxe or shovel in the hole, leave his small belongings beside it, and when he returns, he will find it has been untouched." Not yet had arisen the dark days of anarchy, murders, and robberies.

The Alcalde thought the Colonel would be wise to remain in San Francisco, for adventurers were always returning home and would sail from the San Francisco harbour. Some one of these might appear who had seen Mr. Newton. Besides, there was intense hatred of Americans among some of the old Spanish families who justly resented the cession of California to the United States, and despised Americans, — who "like dogs were always running with their noses to the ground, snuffing about for gold." An American falling into their hands might not escape scatheless.

Obeying these hints, the Colonel spent many weary fruitless days at the wharf, watching the passengers in the outgoing boats bound for the ships in the offing. One day he was attracted by the lounging, lazy gait of a man who was hurling strong words at one of the wharf officials. "Do you think I'll work for you like a damned nigger for \$10 a day? You may tote your own boxes. Hello, stranger!" as he espied the Colonel. "Want a outfit? I can sell this bowl and shovel and these overalls dirt cheap — an' if you don't want to use 'em yo'self, I can find a cheap Injun to dig for you. 'Pears like you can afford it."

The Colonel looked at him narrowly. "Is your name Bangs?" he asked,—"Tom Bangs from Virginia?"

The man's first impulse was flight and the Colonel's first thought was stern rebuke, but he quickly perceived that he might learn from Bangs news of Douglas.

"I am glad to see you, Bangs," he said kindly, and offered his hand.

"Lawd, Cunnel! Is this you? I'm pow'ful glad to see you! Come to find your fortune? How d'you leave all?"

"Have you made your own fortune, Bangs?"

"I don't dig, Cunnel. The work is stiff, an' a man with a fam'ly has to consider his health. It's pow'ful hard on a man's hands — all this diggin' an' rubbin'! I gits along buyin' cheap an' sellin' high, — pickaxes, shovels, and sich, an' anything that comes handy. I'm not lookin' for no great fortune."

"Would you like something to drink, Bangs?"

"No, thank ye, Cunnel! The liquor here is rank pizen, but 'twon't hurt you if you let it alone."

"Well, then, how about coffee? It is very good at my quarters. Come with me."

Over their innocuous cups the Colonel told his story. Tom Bangs had seen Douglas. He had been at the wharf the last of February when the *California* arrived, and had watched the passengers come ashore. A sick man was brought in by two men on a sail, and he recognized Mr. Douglas Newton. "He looked mighty sick," and the men carried him to the Harbour House, and there they left him. He had lost his baggage, but some papers were in his pocket and some money. He, Bangs, went to see Mr. Newton every day, but for a long time he was delirious and knew nobody. "He had the fever and had it bad." One day when Bangs called, Mr. Newton was gone. The people at the Harbour House

said he had walked away in the night. The Colonel asked if he had paid his bill at the Harbour House.

“Oh, yes, suh ! You see he had been sensible for two or three days, but almighty weak. He was tormented cruel by all the dirt an’ fleas an’ noise, an’ I reckon he walked away to git out of Frisco—clean away ! Oh, yes, suh ! He paid the house an’ he paid me, too, as soon as he come to himself, all fa’r an’ squar’. You see I had bought some clean cloes for ’im, an’ he paid me.”

“Now, Bangs,” said the Colonel, “we’ve got to find Mr. Newton ! Give up your trading and peddling. Give me all your time. I’ll make it worth your while.”

He puzzled over the fact of Douglas’s late arrival. He must have altered his plans after writing to Dr. Berkeley, and made the four or five months’ voyage around the Horn. Possibly he had been delayed in Panama. He realized, with a sinking heart, the slender chance of finding him alive.

CHAPTER XXV

THE Colonel's new-found neighbour proved a most efficient assistant, full of interest and fertile in suggestion. Every morning early he reported to his chief, learned the plan for the day, and together they proceeded on their search. Every night found them returning, weary and discouraged, to the Colonel's evening meal and subsequent smoke.

"Wall, now this looks like old times," Bangs said one night when the Colonel produced and presented to him a genuine Appomattox clay pipe. He grinned as he filled it. "'Minds me of the ole ooman." This was the first allusion he had made to his abandoned spouse. He had asked no questions, and the Colonel volunteered no information. As the days wore on, marked by his faithful service, the Colonel had begun to think that Mrs. Bangs might have been too sharp a thorn in the flesh to be endured.

"You see, Cunnel," said his companion, between the puffs of smoke, "it was this-a-way: The ole ooman was pow'ful free with her lan-

gwidge, an' she kinder riled me. If you was a married man, Cunnel, you'd understan' a man can't nohow abide a cussin' ooman an' a crowin' hen. Well, one day she was so uncommon blasphemus I got het up, an' I raly was feared I'd hit 'er! I jus' had to slip out the back do' an' run; — and I run clean to Californy."

"Ah, well," said the Colonel, wearily, "it's all one in a lifetime. Don't talk about it now. I wonder if there's any use —" and he bowed his head on his arms on the table with an air of dejection.

"I knowed you'd git down-hearted as soon as them damned niggers struck up singin' in the street, 'Carry me back to ole Virginny'! That's why I tried to chirk you up a bit tellin' 'bout the ole ooman, an' make you thank Gawd you're a bachelor. There they go agin! Cuss them fellers!" and he dashed out, and threw some silver to the sable musicians. "Here you! Do you want to kill the folks in here with that song. Strike up something hearty now,— 'Susannah' or 'Coal-black Rose,'" — and he returned to his forlorn friend to the stirring strain of "It'll never do to give it up so, Mr. Brown," which my contemporaries doubtless remember.

It was now drawing near to the end of June.

The Colonel, although thoroughly discouraged, had yet no intention of returning. Before leaving home he had gone to Richmond and sold, in advance, his year's crops. Under promise of strict secrecy, he had confided his mission to Harry Newton, for he desired, of all things, to spare Shirley the anguish of suspense and feverish watching for news. He forewarned the Doctor that letters were not to be expected. He reported, however, regularly to Harry, begging him to remain — as his brother had wished — to the close of his term at the University, and promising not to relax in his efforts to obtain news of Douglas. He now, with Tom Bangs, visited some of the Franciscan Fathers, but from them nothing could be learned. The good fathers regarded the search for one man a small thing indeed by comparison with their own misfortunes. Wandering farther and farther south, from one dismantled mission to another, the Colonel would often pause in utter amazement at the gorgeous growths of what seemed to be an eternal summer. Great trees of mango, cocoa, sycamore, palm, shaded banks of thickest verdure. Every atom of brown earth afforded foothold for some brilliant flower. "Sometimes a spike of scarlet flowers was thrust forth like the tongue of a ser-

pent from the heart of some convolution of unfolding leaves, and the creepers and parasites dropped trails and streamers of fragrance from boughs that would shoot halfway across the rivers." Had Douglas broken his heart amid all this beauty? Did his young body lie somewhere beneath it?

The searchers rode mules on these expeditions southward, and it was difficult to restrain the animals as the fields of wild mustard stretched on either side. This wonderful plant, the terror of the farmer, had sprung from its tiny seed, "the least of all seeds," and had become "greatest among herbs, so that the birds of the air lodged in the branches thereof." Thickets of the mustard, in full bloom, looked as though it might have drawn the gold from its roots and held it aloft as an offering, — or as an admirer has described it — as if a golden cloud had descended and become entangled in its branches.

One evening at a small wayside inn the Colonel met another traveller, Father José, journeying to San Francisco from Santa Barbara. Leaving him to hold improving conversation with Tom, the Colonel walked out under a brilliantly starlit sky. Multitudes of stars unknown to the North appear in the wonderful

atmosphere of California — and wisely has the great observatory of the country been located there. Presently a great full moon rose silently from a dark sea of green, flooding the undulating hills with light and here and there lending a gleam to the outstretched arms of the wooden crosses the pious Catholics had erected on their summits. The Colonel walked with uplifted eyes and heart. “When I consider the heavens the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, what is man that thou art mindful of him?”

He unconsciously entered a path shaded with wild mustard growing thickly on each side and arching overhead. He had walked through this natural tunnel absorbed in his own thoughts, when he perceived the figure of a young girl advancing from the entrance beyond. Alarmed at the possible consequences of trespassing, he hid himself among the boughs of mustard. It was light as day at the end of the path, which the Colonel now saw led to an opening and a house among trees. As the girl advanced, he marked her graceful carriage and Spanish dress. Her steps were soon arrested by a hurried voice calling in Spanish: “Señorita!—Señorita Félipa! The Señora commands return instantly! I can do nothing with the Señor.”

“Coming, Maraquita,” answered the girl, running back. The Colonel softly stole forward, until he reached the end of the shaded path. The splendid moon flooded the opening with light. A low house of adobe appeared with a veranda in front on which a dark young man was seated, cutting viciously into a stick of soft wood and grumbling: “Pray return, Félipa! The Don takes nothing from the hands of a servant of the house. The Señorita must serve him,” he sneered.

“Patience, Miguel,” said the girl. “He knows nothing,” and taking a bowl from the hands of the maid, she approached two low trees nearest the opening, between which hung a skin — a rude hammock on which a sick man was tossing restlessly. The girl spoke to him. “Is it you, Señorita,” said the invalid.

“Si, Señor, and I have brought your broth! Take it for Félipa! Then you shall sleep again!”

The girl slipped her hand beneath his head, raised him, and encouraged him in gentle words until he had slowly emptied the bowl. He lay back for an instant, and then in a weak excited voice, said: “I have dropped my rose! It is in a paper; please find it for me.”

"Here is the paper, Señor — all safe."

He took a folded paper, opened it, withdrew a small object, and put it to his lips.

"Ah, only a dried rose!" said the girl. "Is it then so great a treasure, this faded rose? I could gather them fresh for you — cloth-of-gold roses — from the veranda. Is this so precious?"

"Si, Señorita."

"A gift, perhaps, — a token —"

"Yes, yes, a gift, — a precious token."

"And perhaps — perhaps — it may be from a lovely lady?"

There was a long pause. Presently, with a deep sigh, the weak voice answered: "A lovely little lady! With a dear name!"

"I may not know her name, Señor?"

"Her name is Dorothea, Señorita. It means, the gift of god."

It was Douglas! And the precious token the rose the little Duchess had dropped from her window the night of the serenade, and confessed next morning.

The Colonel stood rooted to the spot. His impulse was to appear at once, — but lest that should be unsafe, he resolved to hide until midnight and then try to speak to Douglas,

who was to sleep, he gathered, under the trees. But as the house was preparing for rest, he heard the unchaining of dogs and their impatient barking, and he hastily retreated. He had learned some Spanish years before when on the Pacific coast with his kinsman, Admiral Ap Catesby Jones, and he perceived that Douglas had also acquired it — at least in some measure.

When he returned to the inn, he found Tom waiting for him, and confided his wonderful news.

“We will go early in the morning,” said the Colonel.

“And get a taste of that Miguel’s knife, or be chewed up by them dogs? No, no, Colonel; we must take the *Padré* with us. Father José will be your man. I will follow behind to attend to the horses.”

Early in the morning, the good priest was interviewed. He was much interested, and applauded the wisdom of Tom’s advice. It would have been fatal to approach the family without ceremony. As soon as possible, the party mounted their mules, and repaired to the front of the adobe house of Señora Maria Ramon di Luna. The Señora, clad in black with a rosary at her girdle and some thin black fabric

on her head, received them on the veranda of her house.

The Padré bestowed his blessing, and with much ceremony introduced the *El Estranjero*. Breakfast was announced, and a young girl and young man with a sullen face appeared. They were presented as "Señor Miguel Ramon di Luna" and "Señorita Félipa di Luna." After an excellent breakfast of eggs, fish, and chocolate, Félipa prepared a delicate *cigarito* for each of the guests, — and not until it was smoked did the Padré unfold their errand.

All this time, the Colonel could see the outline of the sleeping figure under the trees, but absolute self-control was demanded by the situation.

The story elicited from the courteous Señora was brief. A young man had wandered into the mustard path and fallen unconscious on the earth. There Miguel and Félipa found him. " 'It is one of the cursed Americans,' " — here she crossed herself — "Miguel had said. 'Let him alone,' — but Félipa had been *devoué* to Our Lady of Mercy at her birth, and she ran to her mother for help. *El Estranjero* had been ill for a long month. Evidently he had begun to recover from fever and this was the dangerous

relapse. He could not walk. Would the Padré see him ?”

Father José then told his friend's story, which was received with much crossing and many tender exclamations. He thanked them for their great care ;—like the blessed Samaritan, they had found a stranger on the roadside and comforted him. Now the Señor Americano had come to take him home, and prayed the Señora's acceptance of a large sum for her charities. Might they see the Señor Douglas Newton ?—for that was his name.

Going alone, after Félipa had made Douglas understand that a friend had come to visit him, the Colonel stood beside the hammock and looked down upon the handsome, emaciated face. After the first moment of intense surprise on the part of Douglas, the two men were clasped in each other's arms.

To move Douglas required time and trouble. Tom was sent post-haste to San Francisco, about twenty miles distant, for the best means of transportation, the kind Señora begging to be allowed to keep her patient until it arrived. When the hour came for the departure of her guest, she commended him to Ave Maria Sanctissima, adding gently, “and do not forget Maria

Ramon di Luna," while from the little attic room in the gable a small red handkerchief waved a good-bye from Félipa. Miguel had completely faced about, and none so eager as he to assist in every way.

Douglas was carried to the Colonel's quarters in the Harbour Hotel, and Tom despatched to inform the Alcalde and find Dr. Wierzbicki. The Alcalde immediately had the sick man removed to his own house. The Doctor examined him and thought it possible he might safely travel — but to be sure, he proposed, after a week's rest, an initial drive with him into the country, that he might observe him closely on the way, and decide the extent of his strength.

Douglas had reason to remember that drive. Pausing midway in a narrow stream for the horse to drink, he was attracted by a cluster of pale pink flowers on the edge of the water. He looked at them silently and for a moment a vision of Shirley, with her morning *bouquet de corsage* of hedge roses, hovered over the spot. Before he recalled himself, he had leaped on the bank — and was back, half fainting, with the flowers in his hand; roots and all coming up from the soft mud. "I think you can travel," said the Doctor, drily. "That is a very beauti-

ful flower — Ah! what is this tangled in the roots? Why — Mr. Newton!” examining it closely, “it is a little lump of gold! An omen, my dear sir, an omen.”

It was decided, however, that the Panama route was out of the question. Douglas was too weak for the hardship involved in that route. He must return by steamer around the Horn, and would reach home in the autumn. There was no crowd on the home-coming ships, and the journey could be made rapidly and in comfort.

“You must help me through, Tom,” said the Colonel. “Mr. Newton will need careful watching. He is imprudent. He had a bad sinking spell after that drive with the Doctor.”

Tom readily agreed, but when the steamer reached Panama, Douglas had been wonderfully strengthened and refreshed, and Tom announced his wish to return to San Francisco.

“And not go home to see your wife and children?” said the Colonel, sternly. “Who do you suppose has been taking care of them since you left them?”

“Well, Cunnel,” said Tom, as he shifted restlessly from one foot to another, “I’ve no call to reckon about it! I know Dr. Berkeley and

Col. Jones of old ! It is jus' this-a-way. I haven't made my pile yet, an' I don't want to be po'-white-folks no mo' in ole Virginia. Yes, suh ; I know you have been lib'ral, but to tell the truth I feel skittish 'bout the ole ooman. She might fling ha'sh langwidge at me ergin, an' I'm loath to tempt her ! It's a sin, suh ! An' Stevens might not take to me, seein' he's heard I'm a bad character. No, suh ! Let me make my pile — an' when I come home, maybe I'll drive up in my coach an' fo'."

He sent a present to his "ole ooman," and the Colonel was obliged to be content. He had his own doubt of Tom's welcome.

Douglas rapidly recuperated in the salt air. The two men grew very close to each other during the long voyage, talking intimately and earnestly on many subjects, but making no allusion to Shirley. As far as the Colonel knew, Douglas no longer thought of her. All that was to be settled between themselves. Shirley had told him that her heart was breaking for Douglas ; he had brought him back to her ! As to himself — Ah ! Far away, far away had fled the angel of Hope from him ! He could not sufficiently admire the noble self-abnegation of Douglas, his keen sense of honour, his complete

atonement for the wrong done by his father, the high loyal position he had taken to protect that father from criticism or comment.

Now about the young fellow's future! This became the Colonel's dearest interest.

One day he said to him: "Do you know, Douglas, I am beginning to wonder what you are going to do for me? I have been at some trouble —"

"Oh, Colonel, have pity! I think of nothing else! I have nothing to give but myself. Really I can do nothing unless you will let me belong to you."

"Precisely — that is my own thought. Catesby is a fine place going to ruin for want of a master. I shall never live there. I expect to go on another long journey soon. My travels have just commenced. How does it strike you to live there yourself with Harry and manage the plantation? It will be full repayment for all I have done, if you will. You and Harry could practise your profession, move over your horses and personal servants."

"And train 'the gadding vine'? Gladly," said Douglas. "But what would old Uncle Abram say? However, I learned under Caleb to know my place — and keep it!"

“Abram will adore you,” said the Colonel,—“and as to Aunt Chloe! she is just the motherly nurse to ruin a fellow,” and so the matter was finally settled.

Despite Harry's efforts to the contrary, news of the home-coming rapidly circulated through the neighbourhood. A crowd of men and boys, black and white, thronged Berkeley Station on the lookout for the northern train. Miss Betty Oliver, standing in her doorway, heard the varied voices, sharp with excitement, and carried away by her own, actually waved a welcome with an intimate garment she had just “whipped off the line.”

“Here they come.” “There's the Colonel.” “There's Newton! What's left of him!” Tom Blackwell, the Pages, the Carringtons—all the boys are there. “Dar he is!” “I seed 'im fust!” “Gawd A'mighty, ain' he fall off!” “Is you bin sick, Marse Douglas?” “Git out de way—who you crowdin'?” “Here me, Marse Jeems, me an' Primrose.” “Git out de way dar an' let de Doctor pass!” “I haven't brought home any gold, boys,” cries Douglas. “Don't want it!” “Don't need it.” “We've got *you* back, thank God.” “Make room there for the Doctor to pass.”

"Welcome home, my boy," says the Doctor, with a keen look at Douglas. "We'll soon fix you up. Ah, James! how we've missed you! I've brought the carriage, and you must come home with me. Ah, Harry! So you went to New York to meet 'em, hey? Couldn't let 'em give you the slip this time."

But Douglas was exhausted and must get on to the Cross Roads with Harry. They would both go soon to Berkeley Castle.

"I pass Beechwood as I come on down," chuckled Sandy. "He! he! All de cows was in de corn! An' dey was busy, too! I come along an' nuvver say nothin'!"

"Then you can hurry right back and drive them out, or tell somebody they are there," said Douglas.

"Come along with us, boys — all of you," said Harry. "We'll put Douglas to bed with a hot brick at his feet, and, by George, we'll have a good old time. Anything to eat and drink at Cross Roads, Caleb?"

"Dilsey is bilin' a ham and roastin' the biggest gobbler in the flock! You lef' plenty to drink, Marse Harry, an' you knows whar to find it."

The Colonel had somewhat dreaded the home-

coming, and had wondered how he could meet Shirley calmly. To his surprise and delight, he felt no agitation whatever. That was all over! He had shut the gate behind him and resolved never to look back. He felt exultant that he could have obtained so complete a mastery over himself!

We shall see!

CHAPTER XXVI

WHEN Harry found Douglas sufficiently rested, he proposed they should pay their respects to the ladies at Berkeley Castle, who had just returned from their annual visit to the mountains—not, however, to the White Sulphur. Nobody except the Colonel and Anne knew of the attachment of Douglas to Shirley — and whether it had survived the long separation the Colonel was in doubt. Douglas had not the faintest intention of ever approaching Shirley. He was now a poor man, and although Dr. Berkeley had met him with every possible expression of affection, much of it may have been from pity.

The dinner party, however, was cheerful. Mrs. Berkeley was all smiles and kindness; Dorothea brave in new ribbons and ecstatic in her complete possession of her adored friend. Miss Prissy was never cleverer or kinder; the Doctor affability itself. Shirley, however, was silent, and shook her head when invited to sing. She was “out of practice — a little hoarse from the mountain air — to-morrow, please.” They talked

over the wonderful new land—its peculiarities, its promises.

At last good nights were in order. "Early hours for our invalid," said the Doctor, and the party separated for the night.

"Rock me a little while, please, Shirley," Dorothea begged. "I'm not a bit sleepy. It's such a hot night; let's go out on the porch."

On the veranda overlooking the garden, Shirley took the tired little girl in her arms. The long-limbed child managed to maintain her place in her sister's lap by clasping her arms around her waist. "Don't make her go to bed yet, Milly," Shirley entreated. "She is so warm! Let her stay awhile in the cool air. And it is so lovely here in the moonlight."

To her surprise, Douglas appeared from the garden, threw away the remnant of a cigar, and drew up a chair beside them, "Just for a moment," he said. "I heard the Doctor order early hours for everybody." He sat in silence for some minutes, looking out upon the garden in the soft light.

"Was there ever such a night?" he said. "A moon nearly full — and the star 'hallowed by lutes in Lesbos' close by."

"Is that an importation from the tropics —

or is it original?" Shirley asked, as she gently rocked her little sister.

"Original? Oh, no! I wish it were. It is a trifle that somehow clings to me. Never read it? Well, I must send it to you. I don't know that I can lay my hand upon it right away, — all my belongings are in such disorder, — but perhaps I can copy from memory. I can at least try."

"Why not repeat it now for Dolly and me. Are you too much fatigued? Dolly adores poetry, you know. You aren't asleep, are you, dear?"

Douglas hesitated. "Really! Do you want it really? You are sure? I don't know that you would care for it. It is a favourite of mine, but hardly worth your hearing. Are you sure?"

"Quite sure! It sounds lovely — 'lutes in Lesbos'! One can almost hear the harps of the Æolians."

"Well, I'll spare you part of the poet's rhapsodies. You see he becomes fascinated with a pair of beautiful eyes. He proceeds to speculate upon their source: —

"Was it from yon lone orb that ever by
The quiet moon, like Hope on Patience, hovers;
The star to which hath sped so many a sigh
Since lutes in Lesbos hallowed it to lovers,
Was that your fount, sweet eyes?"

Douglas hesitated, doubting the propriety of repeating the ensuing verses. Presently Shirley said : "That is charming. The lady answered?"

"It appears she was not expected to answer, or the poet knew perhaps what she would say, for he continues, — let me see," steadying his voice :—

"Ye sibyl books, in which the truths foretold
Inspire the heart, your dreaming priest, with gladness,
Bright alchemists that turn to thoughts of gold
The leaden cares ye steal away from sadness,
Teach *only me*, sweet eyes!"

Another pause — then in lower tones :—

"Hush! When I ask ye how at length to gain
The cell where love the sleeper yet lies hidden,
Loose not those arch lips from their rosy chain;
Be every answer save your own forbidden —
Feelings are words for eyes!"

Dorothea, lying close to her sister's bosom, perceived a gentle, unheard sigh. Disengaging herself from her sister's arms, she looked earnestly into her face. "Now, Douglas, you are just like you used to be! You're going to make Shirley cry, like you did the last time you were here," she said, sitting up and turning reproachful eyes towards him. "I haven't forgotten."

"*Hush*, Dolly! Lie still — don't talk."

"Yes, he did! I heard you say —"

"HUSH, Dorothea! Mammy! This is Dolly's bedtime. Come for her, please."

"'Tisn't anything wrong I'm going to tell," said the child, aggrieved and anxious to be understood. "'Tisn't anything about Mr. Blake."

"Oh, Dolly, Dolly! Stop talking—good night."

But Dorothea felt she was in the right — if only she had a chance to prove it! Milly came in at the moment, and she begged, "I'm so tired! carry me, Mammy!"

"Tote you? — you great big girl! If you was at the Springs, you'd be dancin' this minit! Just tote yose'f on yo own two footses! Come along an' wash an' go to bed."

"Kiss me good night, then, Shirley! You *know* you cried that night long time ago. I haven't forgotten! You just cried an' cried, and said, 'Oh, Douglas, *Douglas!*' And that's why I know he made you."

Our dear masculine fellow-traveller in this vale of tears is prone to declare that he is apt to stumble upon his ultimate hour by accident. He has loved his ladye fayre, — oh, yes, no doubt about that, — and he intended some day to tell her so, — but some unforeseen circumstance had

brought the dénouement when he had least expected it and had really at the time no such intention whatever. Of course it is the fortunate case that is so frankly revealed. Such spontaneous avowals bursting forth *malgré lui* are pretty apt to be successful. On this occasion Douglas was silent. He had not intended to say one word to Shirley to distress her, as he felt he had no right to — as he fully believed an avowal of his love would do — and yet ! He sat silent, apparently intensely interested in watching the moon as it slowly passed behind a little fugitive cloud. Presently it turned a corner of the cloud and looked him full in the face.

Moonlight has been known to exert a malign power over human beings, but on this occasion the influence was distinctly clarifying. Shirley's face was turned upward, for she too felt the need of watching the manœuvres of the little cloud. Suddenly some mysterious message, coming they knew not whence, seemed to be borne on the night wind to both of them. A great light all at once broke into their benighted souls. All at once the mists rolled away, and they saw and understood. Douglas rose and stood before her. "Shirley," he said, bending to look into her eyes. "Shirley ! Have you no word for me ?"

He could say no more. There was no need for more. The words were few and brokenly uttered, but the passionate eyes told the story. Shirley met the ardent eyes sincerely. She had no need to question her own heart. She had known it all the time. Now she knew his! "It was for *you* and not for Anne that he sang that night," whispered the wind. "It was for *you* that she sorrowed. Her tears were for *you*," was the message to Douglas.

He had no need to ask again. Putting her hand in his, she whispered with her own rare smile :—

"Till a' the seas gang dry, my dear!"

When Shirley retired to her room that night, she looked long at the little night-gowned figure on her bed, and finally stooped and kissed the small sunburned face. "The darling! Cousin James's little Duchess! May God bless her, and spare her for just such happiness as mine."

For Douglas, sleep was out of the question. He returned to the garden, intending to seek his old place for contemplation under the willows beyond the wall, but perceiving a light in the Colonel's window, he looked in and begged for a few minutes. "I come to you first, my dear

Colonel, in my great happiness ! I owe it all to you ! A man who has never loved cannot measure the height and depth of the flood that overwhelms me ! God knows I have not deserved it ! Shirley has promised to be my wife."

The Colonel wrung his hand silently — and found a few murmured words of congratulation. He had expected this — had worked to bring it about — and yet —

"We did not forget you in our supreme hour, dear Colonel ! Shirley spoke of you so tenderly ! You are to belong to us and we to you — remember that ; you are to live at Catesby and let us work for you and take care of you."

"And leave my little Duchess ! That would never do ! Besides, I shall not be here. I am going on another journey, you know. But we will have the Doctor down upon us ! I must say good night and God bless you — and drive you off to bed."

He shut his door and extinguished his light and in the darkness clasped his upraised hands — a silent invocation for strength. He had borne the spectacle of Shirley's tears — of her sorrow. He had borne his own ; but now he "tasted the bitterness of looking into happiness through another man's eyes."

He was not the man to indulge in weak self-pity. Evidently it was ordained that he should suffer loss and defeat. So be it! Why should he wish for happiness purchased at the expense of another? True, he had sowed, and another had reaped. He had fostered and cherished and loved, and served through the long years — another had risen at the harvest time and gathered to his bosom the golden sheaves. But of these things he would think no more. With the rising of the next sun he would take up his life again.

First, he must finish and send off his book. Shirley must have a suitable *dotarium*. Then when she was safely in her new home, — and there was much to be done to fit that home for her, — he would go North, see and consult his old friend Mr. Bancroft, make the acquaintance of his New York publishers, and commence work in his new profession. If only it were possible for him to leave at once! But no; that would be a poor return for the heavenly kindness of the Berkeleys — for his little Dorothea's love — for Shirley's trust. He must hasten the book — there was really little more to do to it — and demand payment immediately upon its acceptance. Of the latter he had not a shadow of doubt. Only —

yes, he remembered, — there was that anachronism in the third chapter to be corrected, — and the final pages of the dénouement did not run smoothly, — and oh ! — why, to be sure, there was that serious discrepancy in time in the eighth chapter — events crowded into a week when a month would have been too short, — and lighting his candles, long past midnight, he found the keys to his secretary, drew forth the precious manuscript from which he hoped so much, and plunged into his corrections. Thus, wounded, defeated as he was, he found, as many another poor writer has found, as many will find to the end of time, a little window in the darkened chamber of his pain opened by two angels. Together they entered, — hand in hand, — and the name of the one was “Imagination” and the name of the other was “Work” !

CHAPTER XXVII

It is needless to attempt to describe the interview in the study next morning. Everything that could be said, — generous, cordial, welcoming, — the Doctor said to Douglas Newton in response to the young man's pathetic expression of his sense of unworthiness. "You say she has promised you, — my little girl! She will keep her promise! She is like her mother!" Going to the door, he called, "Shirley, Shirley, you baggage, where are you?"

"Here, Papa," was answered from the lawn immediately under the window. She had been walking among the roses — stooping finally to select a "red, red rose" and pin it in her bosom. "What is it, Papa? Ah, Douglas! You told me you were going."

"Well, he hasn't gone! Look, at him! Is that your idea of a man to take you away from your old father? What do you see in him?"

"Not half as much as I see in you, Papa darling."

"Then why is he chosen from the Gordons and Carringtons and all the rest?"

“He isn’t. He did the choosing! And I thought we might improve him! He needs it! He really does need *you*, Papa dear! Think of the dreadful mistakes he makes in pronunciation,” and she added with a quivering smile, “And he can sing a good song — and recites — oh, very well indeed!”

The Doctor essayed to speak, failed, cleared his throat — and finally putting her hand into her lover’s hand, pushed them gently out of the room and shut the door. Sinking into his arm-chair, he buried his face in his hands for a long time. Those old Virginians rarely showed deep emotion. Dignity forbade an exhibition of feeling before witnesses. Ringing his bell, he ordered Pizarro to request the Colonel to come to him in the study, from which neither emerged until after Douglas left, driven to the depot by Shirley in the little cart with Primrose; Douglas having decided to go immediately to Richmond.

“It seems, James,” said the Doctor, as the Colonel entered, “that we have been going along here with our eyes shut. I was just thinking how fortunate I am to have brought Shirley heart-whole from the Springs, when here comes Douglas Newton and tells me she has promised to marry him! I could hardly have had a more

unpleasant piece of information. I feel I had a right to expect a better match for her. This accounts for Shirley's loss of interest in society and her sadness all summer. Are you not feeling well, James? You are very pale; — any chill, eh?"

"Not at all! I'm all right. Go ahead, Charley! This is news indeed."

"It is too late to consider my own feeling in the matter, but, you see, I am considerably embarrassed just now for ready money — and I am unalterably opposed to long engagements. I suppose I shall have to insist upon one, however, — at least until next year's crops are harvested."

"No, no, Charley! That will never do!" said the Colonel, earnestly. "Nothing must interfere with — nothing must delay Shirley's — unfortunately I am not very well fixed myself just now or I could help materially. I can at least go on a bond with you, and I am *sure* I shall soon have a large sum from my book. I must hurry it off to the publishers."

"If I had not been such a blind fool," said the Doctor, gloomily, "I might have prevented Shirley's engagement. I could have taken her abroad. She is a splendid girl, and could have graced a palace! Yes, I know 'Douglas is a fine

fellow.' Of course he's a fine fellow! Nobody can deny that. But what becomes of our inherited belief that blood will tell?"

"And so it will — always," said the Colonel, firmly. "Douglas Newton proves it. One unfortunate mistake can never discrown a fine old family. It only throws into higher relief some superb action like this of Douglas. Judge Watkins told me he did not hesitate a moment, and really made him feel ashamed of the arguments he felt should be urged against hasty action. Blood does tell! Many a man *wouldn't* condone a fraud, but you see Douglas *couldn't*. Blood does tell."

The Doctor sighed. "God grant it! One thing is certain, — it never tells at the Bank. It never lifts a mortgage or discounts a note or cancels a security. It's a mighty poor substitute for competent fortune in this world of ours."

The Colonel was silent, and the Doctor continued, as he paced the floor impatiently: "A country doctor has a hard road to travel! He is compelled to neglect his plantation, and he must practise on all the poor neighbours. How can he ever make money? He never thinks of such a possibility. Of course, I could postpone the marriage, distress Shirley, distress her

mother. Tears at home! No — no! I am absolutely opposed to long engagements, but it is hard that I cannot establish her as she deserves. At all events, I must have some ready money for her — manage it somehow.”

The Doctor's office was at the end of the long house, one window opening pleasantly upon the front lawn and the other shaded by an apple tree. Dorothea's summer desk was in this tree, and a seat for herself and board on which to rest her book had been provided for her convenience. She had climbed into this tree with her geography in her hand this morning to begin her lessons, now that her teacher had returned, and was absently attempting, with much repetition, to bound the kingdom of France; her attention sorely divided by Gabriella's futile attempts to join her, and her own eager interest in the preparations going on under the trees at the other end of the house for breaking into small cubes the pyramidal loaves of sugar. Her attention had been arrested when she perceived, from the tones of her father's voice, that he was annoyed. She understood little of his agitated, fragmentary talk, as he paced the narrow round of his room, but from that little she presently perceived he was in some great

trouble. The Colonel had not tried to comfort him — perhaps he, too, was heartbroken. The last sentence reached her distinctly. Evidently something dreadful had happened which money would mend. She slipped down from her arbo-real seat, ran into her room, and in a few minutes knocked at her father's door.

“Ah! here is our little Duchess,” said the Colonel, “and we are too busy to talk to her just now.”

“Oh, but I must come in, Cousin James! Papa always has let me help him, ever since you've been away. I've brought him something!”

She put a little box in her father's hands. It contained a string of coral, a little carnelian heart on a tiny chain, a gold bangle, and her amber beads.

“I can't look at these now, Dorothea,” he said gravely. “Run along to your Mother. Don't come in again. I am busy.”

“But, Papa! You can sell the things and get money for Shirley. They are worth — oh — a great deal of money. They are my four last birthday's — my birthday presents from God-mother Ponsonby. I did have two rings, but I lost one,” and she drew a little turquoise

from her finger and proudly added it to the rest.

The two men looked at each other. The Colonel clasped her to his bosom silently, and she saw a tear in his eye. "A little child leads us, Charley," he said. "See! She has brought the whole of her fortune! We mustn't grudge ours! Our Shirley" — and here his voice trembled — "our beautiful Shirley is to be happy at all risks. She must marry the man she loves."

The Doctor nodded; for a moment he could not speak. Giving her back her little box, he brushed his handkerchief across his eyes and turned to his book-shelves. The Colonel took her in his arms, — she was a very small child, — carried her to the window, and explained that there would be no need for her sacrifice, — that all would be arranged for Shirley. The sound of wheels and girlish laughter reached them from the avenue. Shirley was driving her lover along "the road to Paradise" — on his first errand of love!

Douglas did not reveal the object of that errand. He had in his pocket the small lump of pure virgin gold which he had found the last day of his stay in California, when he had driven

with Dr. Wierzbicki into the country "to test his strength." "An omen," the doctor had said. He was taking it to a jeweller to be made into a ring for Shirley. A ring of gems was never chosen in those days — gems had no sentiment; but the circle had no beginning, no end. Besides, a band of gold could be engraved within — and Douglas chose that the ring for Shirley should have pressed the finger of no woman, been offered for sale to no man, but come direct from the hand of the Creator to her. The initials of the two were to be followed by the one word, "Pledge."

Shirley's first duty was to announce her engagement to her godmother and ask for her blessing. A few days later, old Jacob appeared on horseback.— a less responsible messenger could not be trusted — with a letter to Dr. Berkeley. From her window Shirley had seen his coming, with a beating heart — she well knew the old lady — and was relieved at finding that the message was for her father. "Poor dear," thought Shirley; "I hope I haven't given her a turn! She has sent for Papa, I'm afraid."

About "the turn" there could be no doubt — not the least. In agitated, trembling characters, Mrs. Ponsonby had written: —

MY DEAR CHARLES,

I am astounded by the news that the daughter of Charles Carter Berkeley and Mary Randolph Blair is to be given in marriage to the son of Henry Newton. The child must be crazy! And so must *you* be, my dear Charles, to permit such a *mésalliance*.

Your inconsolable cousin,

ELIZABETH PONSONBY.

The Doctor perceived that this was no time for trifling, cajoling, or persuading. In his firm hand, he wrote a reply that petrified, for a time, the irate old aristocrat:—

MY DEAR COUSIN ELIZABETH,

You have often showed me the diamond necklace you wore when you were presented at Court, and called my attention to a flaw in one of the stones. You never removed that stone from your chain, nor did the fact that one of the gems contained a blemish diminish your appreciation of the others.

Your respectful and *consoled* cousin,

CHARLES BERKELEY.

CHAPTER XXVIII

“I THINK, Mary,” said Miss Prissy, a few days after the engagement had been made known to her, “the best thing for me to do will be to go at once to Richmond, stay a week or two with Mary James, and get whatever Shirley will need. Of course she will wear your veil, laces, and pearls. I can select samples at Price’s to be sent to you, and engage Mrs. McComas for her frocks, and I should like to see Mme. Viglini’s bonnets before they are all picked over. If there’s one thing I understand, it’s choosing linen! I never even ask the price until I draw a thread clear across the width, and that’s the only way you can tell whether it is all pure flax. Then there’s the white satin. If you don’t want it to yellow, it must be a clear salt-white, not a bit on the cream. Betty Oliver has a cousin in Richmond who works with a seamstress, and Betty thinks she will be glad to come and stay until all the sewing is done. I could bring her, and we could go to work at once. They’ve given us short notice, but Elvira and Mildred and all the girls will help.”

So early one crisp morning Miss Prissy was driven by the Colonel to the depot, with a little brass-studded, hair-covered trunk and a small bandbox as her sole baggage, for a week's stay in the metropolis. She stopped at Miss Betty Oliver's to consult her and engage her services. "I can do the work," she assured Miss Prissy, "if I can get Polly Oliver to help. She's the neatest hand at hemstitching you ever saw! And as to felling and whipping ruffles, she can't be beat. And she's as steady as any old woman! I'll engage to do some of the white work and the morning-gowns. But one thing I do ask, and that is I don't want any bundles or messages sent here by the Doctor's gardener. He was either drunk or crazy here one day last year. I have no desire to interfere with any of the Doctor's management, but give me negroes every time!"

"I hope Andy didn't misbehave! Why didn't you tell me? Perhaps you misunderstood him. He speaks broad Scotch, you know."

"Well, I claim to be as patient as most. I stand all them Perkinses and Hawkinses, walking about here as if the place belonged to 'em,— and they only renters,— but you know, Miss Prissy, a lone woman has no call to be insulted

in Scotch any more than English. Least of all by a serving man, — and that's what your Andy is."

"No, not exactly! Andy belongs to a reputable clan. He isn't classed with the servants. He lives to himself and intrudes upon nobody. Charles has such a way with him, everybody loves him, and he thinks a great deal of Andy. He has been just splendid in the garden!"

"Well, let him stay there; that's all I ask."

"But you haven't told me what he did. He'll *not* stay there, Betty, if he has been offensive to you."

"He asked me to marry him, that's all! What do you think of that?"

"*What!* Andy asked you to marry him! Of all the impudence!"

"That's what I say! And the worst of it is, he has spiled my record. Over and over, these men about here have thrown it up to me, 'there was never a woman with any sort of a face and figger that hadn't had an offer,' — and I was proud always to say, '*here's one!*' No, Miss Prissy! I've had many sorrows, and disappointments in my work failin' to please, and the railroad comin' and all my white clothes ruined, and them Perkinses and Hawkinses, — but I

could say, no man had ever made bold to make up to me before! He's spiled my record!"

"You must try to forget it. Remember, he may not be quite sound in his head."

"He *won't* be, if he tries any such trick a second time! I thank my heavenly Father that all the settin' and sewin' and low spirits and disappointments haven't taken away the strength of my right arm! I think I gave him a good scare — but now that I'm to have Polly with me, I shall have to be extra careful."

Miss Prissy again advised her to think of it no more, assured her kindly of the respect in which everybody held her, and promised that the gardener should be sent on no errands, and in no way permitted to outrage her feelings; at the same time apologizing for poor Angus, for whom she had much respect.

Shirley's marriage was arranged for Christmas Eve. Douglas had his profession of the law, and he at once proceeded to give an illustration of his powers as an advocate. He reasoned that the sooner he "settled down" with a wife, the better would be his success; that a man's life never really begins until he marries, — and when the case was brought before Shirley, it was easily won.

The months of anxiety had left Shirley with impaired strength and nerves unstrung. Douglas was the first to observe this, and he felt that the home at Cross Roads would afford less quiet and comfort than she needed. Catesby was out of the question. Wingfield's good management had yielded finely during the year for Harry, who now proposed that Douglas and Shirley should spend the winter as his guests in Florida. During the winter, the house at Catesby could be made comfortable.

"I'll return your visit and spend the summer with you," said Harry, "and have my place made fit for a lady to live in. 'Find the lady first!' She'll be easier to find, maybe, if I make a lovely garden for her."

In Virginia a wedding was a great event, second to none other. The family connection was large. Many branches had sprung from the tree planted by the first Berkeley, the first Newton, and everybody was coming for the double event of Christmas and Shirley's wedding.

As the time drew near, every pair of hands was demanded for service. On fine mornings, the Colonel and Dorothea might be seen leading a procession of little negroes, like an antique frieze, bearing on their shoulders mighty coils

of the running cedar of Virginia, which lends itself so gracefully for decoration; its soft tufts of green — like curled ostrich plumes — growing at intervals on long pliant stems.

These were piled on the veranda, to loop every curtain and to outline every picture, window, and doorway.

Anxious visits were paid to Andy and to the conservatory to find whether the camellias would bloom in time, or the orange trees yield a bud or two for the bride. Long rows of wax candles were to be placed in position along the walls and over the arched doors. Wreaths were to be hung from the antlers in the hall, and over the doors and windows.

Dorothea's excitement was quickened when "Cousin Frances" — a sweet little maiden lady with much lavender about her garments — arrived to claim the privilege of writing the wedding invitations. This she considered her due as a near relative. Her fine Italian hand seemed peculiarly suitable for occasions of high ceremony. Delicately traced on thick glazed paper, embossed with an orange blossom in silver, — to be tied finally with satin ribbon and delivered, as far as possible, personally, — were the words deemed most suitable by Cousin

Frances: "The pleasure of your company is requested Thursday evening, December the twenty-fourth, etc."

"Request the honour of your presence at the marriage of their daughter Shirley?" No, indeed; Cousin Frances would have considered this too intimate and unconventional. Shirley, gliding about the house with uplifted spirit, was treated with unwonted respect. Nobody would dare outrage her delicacy by jesting allusions to her marriage. "Come here now, Miss Shirley, and he'p me beat dese aigs," called Hannah, one day from the pantry. "Now I gwine fine out whose weddin'-cake dis is! Ef it's *yown*, you won't have no heart to beat dese aigs. Dar now! What I tell you? Good-bye, Miss Shirley! Don't you run so fas', honey; Hannah ain' gwine tease you no mo'."

All this seems very absurd in these times. The modest isolation and reticence of a bride — her hidings and veilings — are long ago out of fashion with us. If we like them, we must go to the Orient to find them. What would our Shirley have thought of seeing her engagement announced upon the pages of *The New York Clarion*? *Autre temps, autres mœurs!*

Cousin Frances had brought her choicest

present for the bride. As soon as she had, with other relatives, been told of the engagement, she had painted wonderful roses on white velvet. With this she had lined two large, clear glass jars, achieving an underglaze unattained by anything known in ceramic art. The jars, lest some unhappy blunderer should imagine them designed for vulgar use, she filled with white sand. To this present for the mantel, she added one she deemed suitable for the centre-table. She moulded in wax a cluster of pond-lilies, buds, and leaves. These she mirrored on a miniature lake, and spanned them with a clear hemisphere of glass. Could Earth, Air, and Water be typified with more exquisite delicacy?

The Colonel's face was a study when he found these art treasures on the parlour mantel, ranged in line with the Venus, the School of Athens, and the Barberini vase.

He took the latter in his hand, and looked at it long and earnestly.

"Take care, Cousin James!" cried Dorothea. "Mama says it will break if you look at it."

"*Break!*" he said bitterly. "It was broken long ago. It has never *lived* since. I was just wondering how much longer the little Love would

fly on broken wing! However," he sighed, "if there is no other blow, it may live on, brokenly, a long time yet."

When the boxes from Richmond and presents from distant friends began to arrive, Primrose, the Colonel, and Dorothea literally lived on the road to and from the station. She long remembered his growing silence and sadness. Impatient, like all children, of a discordant note, she one day asked him what he was always "so blue about."

"Blue, indeed!" he cried. "When I was just thinking, you little ingrate, what a comfort you are to me." But he sighed as he murmured, "*Grosse seelen dulden still.*"

One day Milly confided to Miss Prissy wrathfully: "None o' you-all thinkin' 'bout the Cunnul in all this fuss! I cert'nly does despise to hear folks talkin' to deyse'f! An' he talk outlandish, too! Hit's a mighty bad sign. Then ergin — what de matter with Miss Nancy? Sump'n done stir up ole Miss Nancy! Folks tell me she cyarn *res*'! Miss Nancy oneasy in her mine 'bout the Cunnel — sho's you bawn."

When Dorothea repeated this, he did not smile as she intended he should. He looked into the child's face wistfully, and she ventured: "What

does '*Grosse seelen dulden still*' mean, Cousin James ?”

“Let me see — something like this, Dolly,” and he repeated slowly :—

“ For not to think of what I needs must feel,
But to be still and patient all I can :
This is my whole resource — my only plan ;
Till that which suits a part infects the whole
And now is almost grown the habit of my soul.’

“Poor Milly,” he added. “I must be careful not to distress her with my '*Grosse seelen*' and such heathenisms.”

All this seemed so foreign to his usual temperament that the child felt a sort of vague anxiety ; hardly more intelligent, however, than the transient uneasiness of an animal when a cloud passes over the sun. But it comforted her in after years to remember that she did observe and did sympathize.

He looked ill a few days before the wedding, and finding that he proposed going again to the station, Dr. Berkeley forbade him. “But, Charley, it is important,” he pleaded.

“Important, is it ? Well, then, I shall go myself. You are overworked in this house ! The best thing for you to do, Jim, is to lie right down

here in my study, and let Mary and Dolly talk you to sleep. It will rest Mary and delight Dolly."

"Indeed," said Mrs. Berkeley, "I am not young enough for James and Dorothea."

The dear Colonel lay down as he was bidden, and smiling up into her face quoted from a lovely poem they had recently read together : —

“ I am a child — and she is a child !
And our love is stronger by far than the love
Of those who are older than we —
Of many far wiser than we —
For this maiden she lives with no other thought
Than to love and be loved by me.”

“That’s a little mixed, Dolly, — but it’s true, isn’t it, dear ?” And somehow the child knew his heart was broken, and that she comforted him — knew it, and was herself comforted.

Her mother was sitting beside the fire, with Dorothea in her arms, and the Colonel with closed eyes had seemed to have fallen asleep, when the Doctor burst in with, “Here you are, James ! Your turn this time. Here’s a present for you.”

“At last ! At last !” cried the Colonel, springing to his feet. The cords were quickly cut from a neat, compact parcel, and under the folds of the

thick brown paper lay his returned manuscript. His arms dropped helplessly to his side. A letter fell from the inner covering. He flushed painfully as he read it. It was from the chief of a great New York publishing house and contained — not the transparent fiction of an apology based upon “a great mass of material on hand just at present,” — but the fair and square announcement that nothing could be done with the book, which “failed to reach the standard demanded by the reading public.” In such fashion did editors dispose of contributors in the forties.

“Ah, James, don't!” said Mrs. Berkeley, as his face paled and his lips tightened.

“Don't tell Shirley,” he whispered.

“But I'm here, Cousin James — I know!” Coming to him, she knelt beside the lounge, and put her arms around his neck.

“Give it to me for my wedding-present. It will be lovely to have it for my own — mine only, not the world's. And — Cousin James, I have an idea! You said it was noble, and about us. We will act it — live it! I shall call Douglas ‘Harold.’ I am his ‘Gwenlian.’”

“Will you, Shirley? I have not been feeling very well. Thank you, dear Shirley.” But his hands trembled painfully as he loosed her

arms from his neck. He fell back, white and anguished, upon the lounge.

“By Jove, Jim,” cried the Doctor, impatiently, “what is all this about? Do you suppose there is only one publisher in the world? What’s the use of making mountains out of mole-hills? Get up from that lounge. Bring out the blue coat and brass buttons. Likely as not you will have to give the bride away. Stevens is waiting for me at the gate. Unless he can get Hargrave to see his wife, I shall have to go to-morrow or next day. If Mary Jane has any conscience, she’ll let me off in time. There’s no help for it. The girl has dangerous symptoms, and Hargrave is afraid he can’t go. He has another just such case!”

“Oh, Papa,” began Shirley, in distress, but she controlled herself when the Colonel exclaimed: “Of course I’ll do it! I shall love to do it.”

“James needs a bark tonic, Charles,” said Mrs. Berkeley, as she followed her husband out of the room. “I’ve noticed it for some time. He has fallen off, and looks wretchedly.”

“James needs nothing of the kind,” he retorted. “What he really needs is a good fox-hunt. You women tie a fellow to your apron-strings; make him errand boy, nurse, chief-cook,

what-not; lock up his liver with jams and syllabub, and then want me to physic him."

"You doctors," laughed his wife, "can blister, bleed, and set bones, but you can't even see when a man is run down with dumb chills."

CHAPTER XXIX

THE house was soon filling fast with a gay company. The bridesmaids, Rosalie, Anne, Mildred, and Elvira of the early summer-house party, had arrived, bringing a white box containing the "favours" they had made among themselves. The custom, borrowed from the Spanish, of wearing bits cut from the bride's ribbons had blossomed into "bride's favours" — a survival of the Spanish custom, first introduced into the mother country when Charles II brought home his Katharine of Portugal to be England's queen. The large white satin rosettes — bride's favours — worn then by groomsmen survive to-day in boutonnières made of the bride's flowers.

The merry bridesmaids pervaded the house and helped with the final touches to the bride's wedding-dress. She was duly provided with —

"Something old, and something new;
Something borrowed and something blue."

The old was the heirloom of lace, the borrowed an orange blossom or two from the coronal of

another recent happy bride, the blue a tiny knot of ribbon on the garter, — the wearing of those full of significance, linking a bride in the chain which stretches far back to the early stages of the world. The wedding-ring and the choice of the third finger as being connected with the heart are mentioned in old Egyptian literature. The blue ribbon, whether worn as a badge, or order, or at bridals, comes down from the ancient Israelites, who were bidden to put upon the borders of their garments a “riband of blue” — blue, the colour of purity, loyalty, and fidelity. The old and the new symbolize her past and future, not divided but united. The “something borrowed” signifies a pledge to be redeemed. Nothing is without significance, which accounts for the fact that all these old-time customs continue from century to century, and are jealously observed to this day.

Shirley's bridesmaids assisted in the delightful task of decorating the wedding supper. A mighty bowl of egg-nog was wreathed with holly in honour of the Christmas Eve; the tables glittered with crystal and silver. All was lighted by many silver candelabra, from which depended wonderful ivory-like ornaments made of tissue paper by Cousin Frances. Every dish had its

garland of green, and all the flowers that Andy and the neighbouring conservatories could furnish.

"Tell me, Aunt Milly!" said one of the bridesmaids, "did you have anything to do with the wedding-cake?"

"Did Milly have anythin' do with the weddin'-cake? I never lef' it fum the time the fust aig-shell was cracked ontwel it come out o' the oven."

"Well, then,— could you give just a little hint where the ring was slipped in after it was cold? Was it near the edge or in the middle?"

"Go way, Miss Rosalie! You ain' got nothin' to do with no ring 'cep'n yo' own weddin'-ring. I'm jes' listenin' now fur yo' Ma to 'gage me to he'p make yo' weddin'-cake! You jes' go off in a corner with Marse Tawm, an' leave the cuttin' of that cake to Miss Elvira an' Miss Anne an' Miss Mildred and t' others. You ain' got nothin' to do with it."

"I think," said little Anne Page to Douglas the evening before the wedding, "it's as little as you can do to make Aunt Milly tell me where she put that ring in the wedding-cake! Somebody must do something for me! The whole county gave you to me for three whole months last year, and if you declined to give yourself, who is to blame

for it? Shirley, of course! But I'll forgive her if she'll find out under what flower the ring is hidden."

"Take care, Miss Anne! Don't tempt me too far. You know perfectly well I was detailed for police duty, when 'the county' was kind enough to observe me. I was required by my employer to guard a valuable and elusive piece of property — 'as sliddery as an eel,' as Angus would say; — and small thanks did I get, besides damaging my own interests! I have to request that the feelings of my best man be respected. Don't drive him to desperation until I have finished with him."

"I think you need all the help he can give you," she replied; "you are talking rather wildly. I wonder what in the world you mean."

Douglas laughed. "Oh, Sister Anne, do you see somebody coming? Patience! He will come, never fear!"

Anne tapped her head significantly. "Not quite a' there, I'm afraid," she said sadly — and affecting to hear herself called, exclaimed, "Oh, that's Major Selden — I hope! He's perfectly charming! I can never, never understand why Shirley didn't set her cap for him."

The wedding evening came at last. To Doro-

thea it seemed a great blur of laughter, tears, kisses, flowers, — and an all-pervading whiteness.

Like the murmuring of many waters were the sounds that filled the house: the frou-frou of silken garments, hurried, eager footsteps; whispers, hushed greetings, low musical laughter. Suddenly a stillness fell on the company. Out of it rose the solemn voice of Bishop Meade, as he mingled the cup whereof every son and daughter of Adam must drink wholly or in part; riches, poverty; sickness, health; cleaving, forsaking, parting — death.

“Who giveth this woman to be married to this man?”

“*I do.*”

And then Shirley — lately grown so grave, so reserved — surprised them all. To be sure only relatives were present — but Shirley threw back her veil and kissed the Colonel!

Harry was, of course, his brother's best man. After the ceremony was over, supper eaten, healths drunk, he stood among the bridesmaids to assist when the fateful wedding-cake was cut. A long search failed to reveal the ring foretelling the next wedding. The thimble, condemning to spinsterhood, was found by Rosalie — to the amusement of many who were already notified of

her approaching marriage. Little Dorothea wandered through the rooms, finding something to do for everybody, and seeing that all the old people and children were served.

"You haven't said a word to me, Miss Dorothea," said Harry Newton, "and you know you are my little sister now."

"I don't think so," said Dorothea; "you are always my cousin, — like everybody else; but only Douglas has come into the family. I'm afraid there isn't anybody left for you," she said regretfully. "There's Aunt Prissy!"

"Ah! now you have it!" said Harry. "I'm devoted to Miss Prissy, but she wouldn't have me. I have decided to wait for you. Yes, yes, I forgot the Colonel! But I say, Dolly — do you see Miss Anne Page anywhere? Where has she run off too?"

"Cousin Anne is behind the oleander. She hasn't run very far. She said she would rest there a minute. Must I call her?"

"No, no, dear! Let her rest;" but he at once began to make his way through the crowd to the clump of evergreens and potted plants at the end of the room. There he found Anne, and stood silent before her.

"It's been such a lovely wedding," she re-

marked. "I never saw Shirley look as beautiful."

No answer, and presently Anne essayed again. "Douglas looks very handsome, too. Everybody is looking well, even old Mrs. Ponsonby. Did you notice the magnificent diamond necklace she gave Shirley — every stone pure white and perfect, except one? The honourable old soul mentioned it."

Harry was still silent. "Angus, who knows everything past, present, and to come, says we shall have snow to-night," said Anne, talking fast. "We've had the most glorious winter! I do hope they won't have bad weather for their trip to Florida."

Harry stood looking at her with an amused smile on his face. Finally — as she seemed to have exhausted her stock of subjects for conversation — he said gravely: —

"Anne, how many times have I asked you to promise to marry me as soon as I finish at the University?"

"I have no head at all for figures; I always failed in my arithmetic classes at school. And I've a poor memory! If you asked me once, I've forgotten it. Besides, you ought to have been thinking about your lessons."

“Why do you clench your poor little left hand like a prize-fighter? Oh, Anne, Anne! *I saw you find the ring!* — and you are hiding it close in that shut hand;” and bending the unresisting fingers apart, he revealed the missing treasure.

Anne stood like a culprit before him making no resistance. He took the ring from her open palm, put it a moment reverently to his lips, and then gently slipped it upon her third finger.

“It fits very well,” Anne faltered, “and it is a beautiful ring. I didn’t tell I had found it because — because —”

“Oh, because,” said Harry, “you knew my hour had come! It fits, yes — because it was intended from the beginning of the world for you — and was made and sent and found to be my darling’s prophetic ring! There’s dear old Douglas looking at us across the room. Let both of us kiss our hands to him — he’ll understand.”

Anne had now recovered herself. “Of course I am willing to kiss my hand to Douglas, but you see, Harry, I’ve not said — ”

“No, dear, you’ve not said a word! Ah! there’s Douglas waving his hand to us! All right, old man, it’s all right” — and before Anne had time to think, she had waved with

him back again. They saw Douglas stoop and whisper to Shirley, and then both kissed hands to them.

"I shouldn't be surprised," said Colonel Carington as he took a glass of old Madeira with his friend Mrs. Henry, "if we have an epidemic next spring of weddings. They are infectious. I have rarely seen an isolated case."

"I think I could name three or four couples already," said Mrs. Henry. "Of course my Rosalie's comes next, — early in February, — and your Elvira and Mildred are promised soon after. I am afraid my favourite, little Anne Page, will be left out in the cold. She is a sad little coquette. She doesn't acknowledge that anything is in sight for her! I wish she could capture Colonel James! He is really too fine a fellow to be an old bachelor."

Similar remarks and prognostications were expressed by Milly to old Isham. "This yer's jes' a beginnin'. One weddin' brings many. Bimeby ther won't be no ole maids lef' but Miss Prissy."

"True for you, Sis Milly," said Isham. "Ef you kills one fly, a hundred will come to his funeral. But you needn' worry about Miss Prissy. Miss Prissy cert'nly had her day!

'Peared like she could have had the angel Gabrel — ef she wanted him! None o' dese young ladies nowadays could hold a candle to her."

"Humph!" said Milly, indulging in the expressive unspellable Southern exclamation, which is made by tone and emphasis to express, as circumstances may demand, surprise, acquiescence, doubt, or contempt — in this instance, the latter. "Humph! Miss Prissy ain' got no use fer the angel Gabrel! What she gwine do with a musty feathery ole angel?"

Isham shook his grey head. He was a deacon in the church and "Sis Milly's" occasional lapses into irreverence caused him sincere concern.

As Miss Betty Oliver pervaded the house, assisting everywhere, Andy had much ado to secure for himself a coveted honour, — the presentation by his own hand of the magnificent bouquet his skill had attained for the bride. After many furtive peepings and quick hidings behind doors, he espied Miss Betty absorbed in placing certain dishes in position on the table, and beckoning to his friend Isham with fearful contortions of his face suggesting danger signals, "Whisht, mon," he whispered, "haud the door a wee till I win speech wi' the young leddy."

Isham nodded assent, and Andy crept in on tiptoe to Shirley.

“Oh, Andy, you dear good fellow! How perfectly adorable! Camellias and Cape Jessamine!”

Andy bowed low; he was on his mettle. “Na, na, it's nought but a wee trifle! May guid an' guid only ben yer portion, my bonny leddy! Ye'll kindly tak auld Angus' benison whare'er ye gang.”

“See, Douglas, — see the magnificence of our Andy!”

“Ah! Superb! Splendid! Oh, Andy, Andy! Try again, old fellow! — ‘as good fish in the sea as ever yet were caught,’ you know!”

“And lang may they bide there for a' Angus. I hae had —” but here Dorothea touched his arm. “Uncle Isham says ‘look out’; I don't know what he means, but he asked me —”

Angus heard no more. He was close to a door leading into the veranda, and any one happening at the moment to be at a rear window might have seen his angular figure fleeing to the shelter of his own sanctuary.

CHAPTER XXX

“I FEEL like a thief, Charley,” said the Colonel to Dr. Berkeley, who returned several hours after the ceremony. “The Bishop positively declined to wait. Talk of Medes (and Persians), but commend me to *this* Meade for cast-iron Rules and Regulations.”

“Wear your honours, my dear boy,” said the Doctor, with his arm around the Colonel’s shoulder. “This seems to be your great day. I have just parted from a newly arrived citizen who is to be christened ‘James Jones Stevens.’ He hopes you appreciate the distinguished company in which you find yourself. I tell you,” he added, shaking his head, “that poor girl had a close call! But she’s all right now. So you gave my girl away, and had a kiss for your pains! Easier for you than for me, I warrant. But after all, it is for her happiness, I do believe. I thought a good deal about her coming home, and I feel that we attach too much importance to the mere accessories of life. Douglas is a fine fellow, — and he will win

for her all she needs. She will like everything better if he works for it. How did Mary seem to stand it?"

"When did dear Mary ever think of herself? Never since I have known her."

When the merriment of the young people was at its height, the Colonel found his little Duchess, tired out, but bravely keeping up for the going away at dawn to meet the train.

"Well, little Dolly, here you are! We have been good little girls, haven't we? Do you know what's going to happen? We don't like good-byes — you and I. We are going to find Mammy, and we three will run away to the office. You and she will sleep in my back room. Let's be off before we are found out!"

He had made of the small room at the rear of his own a bower of bright stuffs and evergreens. A fire burned on the hearth. A little white dressing-table stood in a corner, and as white a cot held out inviting arms to an utterly exhausted little maiden. Mammy brought her quilts to spread before the fire, fully intending to steal away as soon as Dorothea should be asleep. The Colonel bade the little girl good night, and entered his own room. Dorothea observed, resentfully, that he had forgotten to kiss her.

He had not forgotten! His own good night kiss from Shirley still trembled on his lips. There must be no other to-night.

Half an hour afterward, Milly knocked at his door. "I can't do nothin' with Dolly! She's so nervous and excited I'm feared she'll make herself sick. She done stuff herse'f with everything an' she won't sleep a wink. You mout speak to her, Marse Jeemes. I got her up and put her flannel gown on her to rock her to sleep — but 'tain't no use."

"I don't feel like sleeping myself, Dolly," said the Colonel. "Can't we get the wedding out of our heads? If you invite me, I'll draw up a chair here to your fire. I'll be company and you shall entertain me. Wait a minute! I'll bring my arm-chair. That's right, Milly! Take her Grace into your lap. Now what are you thinking so much about?"

"I'm just not sleepy. I was thinking about that night when I told Douglas Shirley had cried. I oughtn't to have told him— Shirley didn't wish it—and maybe if I hadn't, she would never have married him."

The Colonel assured her that nothing she could have done could possibly have prevented that!

“And then I couldn't get the poem out of my head. And the star and the lovers and Lesbos — and all that. It was beautiful, and I understood it very well. It's the star that bothers me. Why did the lutes sing to the star?”

“Lawd,” said Milly, “ef this chile don't go crazy 'twill be His mercy. Make 'er stop talkin', Marse Jeemes.”

But the Colonel was wise. With children the worst plan of all others is to check the expression of their wondering interest in all that is so new to their young minds. He told Dorothea that she was quite right; that great and wise men all over the world had wondered at the stars, and poets had sung to them — those beautiful lights that God had set in the sky; and then, with exquisite tact, he led her mind to the familiar old Christmas story, and pictured to her in his own inimitable manner the lambs and sheep lying asleep in a far-away time in a far-away country, and the young shepherds talking together to keep themselves awake; and how a great star suddenly blazed out in the dark sky, and the shepherds heard strange voices in the heavens, proclaiming that God had sent His Peace upon the sleeping world; and how wise and learned men also saw the star, and

knowledge came into their hearts that a Child had been born who would grow up to save and bless all the people then, and all who would come after. And how the wise men longed to find him that they might adore him, but could never have found him but for the beautiful star which moved on, leading them a long way over hills and valleys, until it stood still over an humble manger, — and there they found the Child and worshipped him and brought him perfumes and such things as they could procure, and so on, to the end of the divine story — so precious, so cherished, so little understood! And then he reminded the little girl that because of our faith in this Child and obedience to his teachings, all would be forever well with us, — every one, — and if we made mistakes, they would be forgiven; that knowing this, we should be happy.

“But I can't feel happy that Shirley's married. Can you, Cousin James?”

“Yes — I can be happy! *She* is happy! That is enough, darling, for me.”

“Well,” said Dorothea, resignedly, “I'll try not to mind! I have you! I'll play I'm a lonesome little girl, and you are my fairy prince.”

“Oh no, not so! I was a lonesome old fellow,

and had never been of much use in the world, and had never had anybody to love me much, until I found a dear little Duchess who took me in and taught me how to be happy. You must never forget that. Come, now, our talk has rested both of us. Come, Mammy, put her to bed," for the child's eyelids were drooping; "she is going to sleep like a dormouse, and so am I." He stooped and lightly touched with his hand the top of her drooping head. "Good night, dear little Duchess, good night." She was too far gone with sleep to respond, but she must have heard — for before dawn she had a beautiful dream of hearing again distinctly, "Good night, dear little Duchess, good night."

Late next morning, Dorothea was awakened by her father's voice at her little window, bidding her dress quietly, come out of the back door, and not disturb the Colonel, who was still asleep. Milly had stolen in without waking her and kindled a fire. Looking out, she saw that snow had fallen in the night and was hanging in loose wreaths from the boughs of the evergreens. A great bush of leafless Scottish broom stood before her window, its many slender stems coated with icicles which glittered in the morning sun like a fountain of diamonds. She remembered

that her sister was far away on her journey, and a keen pang of grief at losing her clutched at the child-heart.

When she was ready to sally forth, she found her father slowly pacing the gravelled walk leading to the house. As she looked around all seemed changed — sad, silent, and cold. Her father kissed her, and took her hand with a look that arrested the “Merry Christmas” on her lips. He spoke gravely, reverently, of the gift of gifts — and of the Christmas angels’ message of peace. And then he told the wondering child gently that the Colonel was asleep — and would awake no more in this world.

It was poor little Dorothea’s first sorrow, and none in after life was keener. She cherished in her silent heart an indignant protest as she heard Major Selden and others who had known him from boyhood speculate upon the possible hereditary cause of his death. “I knew him — not they,” was her thought, and she recalled the last lines he had quoted to her: —

“‘But our love was stronger by far than the love
Of those who were older than we.’

“Ah! I know now why he has been taken from me: —

“‘The angels, not half as happy in heaven,
Went envying him and me.’

“Yes, that was the reason. — That was the reason!”

Milly could not be kept away from the room in which the assembled guests mournfully discussed the causes of his death. She had drawn Dorothea to her faithful bosom, and gently rocked her while they talked. “Dorothea was the last one that saw him,” said the Doctor. “Tell us, Dolly, — what did he say to you?”

But the stricken child could not answer. She turned her face away. She could not speak. “‘Deed, no, Marse Chawles,” said poor Milly, tearfully, “‘Zarrer was de las’ one saw de Cunnel. ‘Zarrer run befo’ de kerridge down the avenue to open the big gate fur Miss Shirley, an’ he see the Cunnel close to the hedge by the gate. The Cunnel nuvver say nothin’ to ‘Zarrer — he jus’ stan’ thar, ‘twel the kerridge was out o’ sight an’ then he sorter melt away! ‘Zarrer say he cert’nly was skeered, — the Cunnel look so white, — an’ I tell him ‘twarn nothin’ but a dream o’ hisn, an’ ‘twarn none o’ his business anyhow to be dreamin’ ‘bout the Cunnel.”

“The boy was mistaken,” said the Doctor,

turning to his guests. "Poor James must have died about three o'clock. The carriage did not leave until four. Shirley missed him and made me promise to look after him, which I did as soon as she left. There was a light in the office, and I naturally supposed he was avoiding the good-bye. When I found him, he had been dead fully an hour. His candle had burned low. A large package of manuscript was smouldering on the hearth. Dear James had evidently lighted it, and lain upon the lounge to watch it burning."

"His precious book! His Lost Song!"

There is something inexpressibly pathetic in the mute grief of a young child. Dorothea asked no questions—the faces around her already answered. For the time all sunshine, all joy, died in her heart. When her gentle mother saw she could not be comforted, she gave her the Colonel's Bible. "No one has opened it, dear. It is yours just as he left it—yours only." She read in the Gospels morning and evening for a week or two before she turned the pages of the Old Testament. With the reticence of a child she pondered, but did not reveal, what she found within.

Marked, interlined, and dated on the day she had sat in the apple tree and overheard his pleading for Shirley's happiness were the words :

“Love is strong as death !”

“Many waters cannot quench love, neither can the floods drown it !”

In the blank space beneath the Canticle he had written and dated on that last Christmas Eve : —

“Almighty God ! If it shall please Thee to accept this, my sacrifice, return it, I beseech Thee, in blessings upon her whom I have loved with a love strong as death — and upon him to whom through Thy strength I have given her.”

“A love strong as death,” pondered little Dorothea. “That must be a great love. I thought,” and her lip quivered, “that he loved his little Duchess best of all ! But he loved Shirley best ! He loved me like papa loves me, I reckon ; and he loved her like Douglas loves her. She shall never know it ! She shall never know that Douglas came and broke his heart — his dear, dear, dear heart ! He wanted her to be happy — and if I told her, she could never be happy any more.”

A guest one day was discussing with her mother the meaning of the mysterious figures on the

Barberini vase on the parlour mantel, and Dorothea suddenly recalled the day when the Colonel had looked long at the timid soul entering the land of shadows, and wondered how much longer the little Love could fly on broken wing to light the way. She had a great desire to own this vase to keep with the Bible safe from further harm, and her mother gave it to her.

Handling it carefully as she wrapped it in soft silk, she perceived the design on the bottom—the beautiful hooded figure with finger on lip, supposed by the learned to represent the Phrygian Atys, or to be symbolic of secrecy. To poor little Dorothea the sealed lips gave no message as they do to others,—no mournful hint, in view of the lesson on the vase, of imperfect knowledge, no whisper that “after all, what do we know” which makes silence the only alternative. To her the message seemed to be that her adored Colonel’s secret should be kept sacredly, and in her prayers she asked that she might have strength so to keep it. It was rudely wrested from her, however—but only to be given to her mother. The two kept it, a sacred inheritance from the dear one who had so jealously guarded it all his life.

About a month after the Colonel’s death

Mrs. Bangs paid Berkeley Castle a visit — a visit somewhat dreaded by Mrs. Berkeley and Miss Prissy, who felt little able to bear her remarks and condolences, her touch upon their sorrow — sorrow too sacred for discussion even among themselves. But they were too kind to deny themselves to the poor woman who had come so far — at least, Mrs. Berkeley was too kind, for Miss Prissy fled to the sanctuary of her own room. Mrs. Bangs laid aside her black quilted hood and revealed a face, every line of which was drawn to the deep affliction mark.

“Oh, yes'm, Ma'y Jane an' the baby is doin' right smart. 'Twas onreasonable for him to come the night of Miss Shirley's weddin', but Ma'y Jane declar'd fo' gracious she couldn't help it. An' I don't know which cried the fiercest, the baby or Ma'y Jane, when we all heerd 'bout the Cunnel. Yes'm! We sholy does walk in a vale o' tears. This worl's a wil'erness o' woe as the hime says. Po' Cunnel! How he used to come and set with me time an' ergin at the old place. 'Peared like I was the only one could understan'. *I* always knowed the Cunnel's feelin's befor' he spoke 'em. He was that familious with us. *I* knowed his trouble,” she added, shaking her head wisely.

"We were much surprised here. The Doctor never suspected anything serious! He was thinking perhaps a tonic" — Mrs. Berkeley said brokenly; "and indeed, if we had been less absorbed! But it was an inherited malady, we suppose!"

"Yes'm, yes'm. That's so! They all inherits it. 'Pears like, po' creeturs, they're made that way, and can't help therselves. No'm, 'twarn't natchel for him to talk. They never does. It takes folks to find out from their looks. Ther's signs, 'thout no words," said Mrs. Bangs, nodding her head with an air of mystery.

"What do you mean, Mrs. Bangs? Had Colonel Jones any attack of vertigo or faintness in your house?"

"Oh, yes'm, yes'm! That is, I mean to say, he acted strange many an' many a time! He would set 'thout sayin' a word an' look at Ma'y Jane sorrowful-like an' sorter outdone, and then pull himself together an' git out his cheer sudden, an' say 'good evenin',' and go, — like that."

"Is that all? He was always very sorry for Mary and for all of you. But about vertigo or faintness? Try to remember! Tell me

everything," said Mrs. Berkeley, gravely. She was under the impression that Mrs. Bangs was keeping something back.

"Lawd, Mis' Berkeley, 'tain't no use me beatin' round the bush this-a-way! The Cunnel had sot his heart on Ma'y Jane — an' she sholy was a mighty pretty girl! He never was the same after she went with Dick Evans, and then when she married Stevens he just give up! Las' time I see 'im he come to tell me 'bout Mr. Bangs an' I seed he was miz'able an' onreconciled."

"It's not true, Mama, it's not true!" cried Dorothea, indignantly. "Don't believe her! Oh! *make* her stop! I *know*! I can prove it! Send her away!" and the child burst into passionate crying.

"Lawd, Miss Dolly, what's the matter? Lawd, chile, I'll take it all back if it hurts yo' feelin's. It don't make a mite of differ now. Sometimes folks can see things — an' then ergin they can't, an' —"

"This will never do, Mrs. Bangs," said Mrs. Berkeley, sternly. "You have made a dreadful mistake. Of course the Colonel was silent and sad when he saw Mary, and of course he never was the same after she 'went with' Dick Evans.

He was relieved. He felt she was provided for — and when that failed, he made another plan for her and for all of you. You must take back all you have said. I forbid you to repeat it. It is absolutely untrue — and perfectly ridiculous. Dorothea knows what she is talking about. Come, you needn't go," for the poor woman had risen with a troubled face. "Stay and get your dinner — and we will find something to send Mary — but I forbid you to repeat what we know positively is not true."

That night Dorothea hid her face in her mother's bosom. She had the Bible in her hand.

"Has my little darling something to tell me?" asked her mother, tenderly.

"It was Shirley — it was Shirley," said the sobbing child, and opened the book before her mother's eyes. "He loved Shirley — and she broke his heart. He was miserable. She and Douglas were happy, and they broke his heart!"

"No, my child," said her mother through her tears. "No one who could so feel, so write, could be miserable! His thought was too noble — too exalted! It gave him strength to bear. It was in itself a reward! Nor did he die of a broken heart! God called him as he had called his father, — as he had called his only sister!

Moreover, his life had been happy! 'Never was ill,' — 'never grew old, never saw those he loved suffer, never suffered himself!' And it was given to you to make his life so happy." And the two — the mature woman who had known sorrow, and the child not yet at the end of her first decade — strove to comfort each other.

But no one could so comfort the sorrowing child as a little boy who had known a greater sorrow. Children are best understood by children.

Little Jack, her White Sulphur friend, had lost his mother, and meeting him one day at the depot, *en route* with his father to their Southern home, the Doctor had begged for a visit to Dorothea. While little Jack's heart was full almost to bursting, he had never spoken of his mother — nor could he speak of her now. But one day as he sat with Dorothea on the broad stone beneath the willows and tried to amuse her with the antics of the little fishes as he fed them with crumbs, Dorothea sobbed out, "Oh, Jack, I can't — I can't bear it. It *hurts* so here," laying her hand on her breast, "it aches so! Tell me, Jack! You know — tell me! Will it always ache like this?"

"No, Dolly;" but little Jack's face contradicted his words.

"But I want it to hurt if that makes me remember! I don't want to forget."

"It will always ache, I think," said poor little Jack, "but — somehow — you get used to its aching, and you learn to bear it, and not mind quite so much;" and with this hope, Dorothea strengthened herself to endure.

When the Colonel's papers were examined, it was found he had made a will the day after he learned of Shirley's engagement. He manumitted all of his slaves, and provided for the support of the infirm and aged. Except Primrose and the cart, and some books and pictures (to Dorothea), and his mother's jewels to be divided between Mrs. Berkeley and Miss Prissy, he bequeathed his entire estate to Shirley.

Before Douglas and Shirley returned, Dr. Berkeley completely renovated their future home. The hospitable entrance was reopened, and the box at the gate trimmed back to its original shape. The growth of ten years' weeds was cleared away, trees trimmed, shrubs pruned, the gadding vine lifted from the earth and trained anew in the way it should go. Once

more the sun looked down upon the old garden freed of its trammels, and upon the lawn relieved of its burden of rubbish; and brought back "the hour of splendour in the grass — of glory in the flower." The old colonial house was thoroughly cleansed and renewed within and without. Miss Prissy and Miss Betty Oliver moved over to superintend preparations for the home-coming early in April. Everything needful for Shirley's comfort was provided from the stores at Berkeley Castle. On the day of her arrival, great bushes of lilac, syringa, and snowball were in full bloom, the honeysuckle redolent of sweetness and the Seven Sisters Rose budding in profusion over the long veranda in the rear. "I am determined," said Miss Prissy, "that everything shall be exactly as my dear James would have wished;" and she kept her word.

The young people he had loved soon gathered as he had prophesied they would, under the shelter of the old mansion. Some of the choice spirits of our world never seem to leave it! There is a strange, dear, clinging companionship with them all the time. They live — their faces, attitudes, gestures — in our daily consciousness. No longer a part of the world

around us, they have become a part of ourselves.

Shirley could never realize that she had lost the dear Colonel. As she went about the old house singing in the fulness of her heart, her eyes would meet the "following eyes" over the mantel, and she would throw them a kiss from her fingers, never stinting in her song.

Unconsciously she was accomplishing that for which he had given his life. She was happy!

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